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## THE DEFENCE OF FREEDOM

*By the Same Author*

PROCRUSTES  
or  
THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH EDUCATION  
*Kegan Paul*

A REALIST LOOKS AT DEMOCRACY  
IF THE BLIND LEAD  
*Benn*

# THE DEFENCE OF FREEDOM

BY  
M. ALDERTON PINK

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
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To  
THE MEMORY  
OF  
HENRY RAMIÉ BEETON



## PREFACE

As the author of what I believed to be an unanswerable criticism of the existing democratic system<sup>1</sup> I ought perhaps to say something in explanation of my apparent change of attitude in the present volume. In my earlier book I was attacking the false assumptions on which conventional democratic thought and practice are based. The destruction of shams and illusions then seemed to be the most important political task. I still think that the existence of these shams and illusions is the chief obstacle to progress in the art of government among the free nations. In the five years that have intervened, however, the situation has undergone a serious change: theoretical criticism of democracy has grown in volume and power, and the menace of dictatorship has become a reality even in the countries in which Parliamentary government has been long established. Whereas five years ago one could leave the question "What do you propose to put in place of the present democratic system?" without a clear answer, it is not possible to do so now. The position of Parliamentary government in the world to-day is so insecure that a new practical policy has become the immediate and urgent need. Such a policy must take one of two forms: we may

<sup>1</sup> *A Realist Looks at Democracy* (1930).

either scrap existing institutions, or we may try to adapt them as rapidly as possible to modern needs.

Which of these two courses we take will depend on our attitude to the problem of liberty. It happens that in the world of to-day liberty and democracy are identified. I am aware that in theory the two are not inevitably associated. Signor Croce, indeed, has recently declared in his work on *The History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century* that the spirit of democracy and the spirit of liberty are antithetical. "Liberty is a religion of quality, of activity, of spirituality, democracy a religion of quantity and mechanics." Into the philosophy of the matter, however, I need not enter. In actual fact, liberty survives only in the states that have retained the democratic system. If, therefore, I advocate the reform rather than the supersession of democratic government, it is for a very practical reason. The preservation of liberty has become the foremost need of the world. At the present juncture, to scrap those institutions which alone respect individual freedom would be to throw away the baby with the bath-water. Defenders of freedom have no choice, it seems to me, but to do their utmost to shore up the fabric of democratic government while proceeding with thorough internal reconstruction.

I have said so much in order to anticipate a possible charge of inconsistency. But perhaps I need not be over-anxious on this point. I shall not be at all surprised if hardened democrats complain that in attempting to make the best of



democracy I go near to making an end of it. In any case, so far from wishing this essay to be considered apart from its predecessors, I should like it to be regarded as the third of a series dealing with different aspects of a single theme.

One other preliminary word is desirable. In the following pages I have assumed that liberty as generally understood in the democracies is a good thing. As my aim was to deal with practical rather than theoretical issues, it did not seem necessary for me to begin by bringing J. S. Mill's well-known arguments up to date. Even if I had thought of doing so, I should have been anticipated by Mr. C. E. M. Joad, to whose *Liberty To-day* (Watts, 1934) I may refer anyone who feels that the theoretical basis of a free society needs strengthening.

M. A. P.



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## CHAPTER I

### FREEDOM IN ECLIPSE

#### §1 *Putting the Clock Back in Europe*

FREEDOM is on the defensive because the peoples who established free institutions have not proved themselves equal to the task to which they set their hands. The spirit that produced the nineteenth-century liberal state shows marked signs of exhaustion, and the electorates on whom the vigour of Parliamentary institutions depends have not fulfilled the hopes placed in them. Unless the democracies can evoke a new enthusiasm for their basic principles, a more intelligent and widespread interest in the art of government, and a greater readiness to adapt political forms to contemporary needs, the cause of liberty, with which they are identified, can hardly survive the perils to which it is now exposed.

Much of the danger to the democracies has come from their sluggish response to changing circumstances. They have been left very bewildered and rather incredulous by the extraordinary transformation undergone by the European political scene in recent years. Before the War the observer of Western civilisation would have said that the long struggle against intellectual and political

despotism was nearing its end and the final victory of liberty was well in sight. There were still backward nations, of course, but it seemed to be only a matter of time before they would fall into line with the progressive countries and a rational order of free societies would be established. In the liberal states the nineteenth century had witnessed the culminating efforts to secure unrestricted discussion and publication of opinion; religious animosities were on the wane; public thinking was more and more conditioned by the scientific habit of mind. There was indeed good reason for hoping that the ground so far won would be permanently held. Even the immense disaster that overtook the world in 1914 gave no immediate cause for doubt. Did not the Allies fight to destroy Prussian militarist autocracy, and was not one main result of the War to bring about the collapse of the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires, to create several new independent states, and thus to effect a great extension of free political institutions?

In 1917 Russia had fallen into the hands of a revolutionary oligarchy, and the limited freedom of Tsarist times had given place to the complete subjection of the individual to the State. But it was a long time before most Western observers would believe in the permanence of the new régime and would realise that an important political experiment was in progress. The attempts of Moscow to foment a world revolution had little effect, and were soon dealt with by the old democracies. Then in 1922 came the Fascist seizure

of power in Italy, and the world watched another variety of totalitarian state come into existence. Still the democratic nations found it difficult to believe that government based frankly on a denial of individual freedom could last for long. But meanwhile Mussolini established himself firmly, and Fascism, from being a policy of action, developed into a political creed of as challenging a character as Communism. It was possible to dismiss the military dictatorships that arose in Spain and Turkey, and Pilsudski's quasi-dictatorship in Poland, as regrettable aberrations from democratic forms brought about by special conditions of political instability; and, of course, Mustapha Kemal's conquest of power could be readily characterised as a natural recrudescence of oriental despotism. Thus, although the ideas of Communism and of Fascism were attracting more and more attention outside Russia and Italy, and the infant German republic seemed none too secure, the advocates of liberal institutions as yet saw no cause for alarm. The traditional frontiers of liberty in the great democracies of Great Britain, France, and the United States seemed safe from attack.

And yet for those who had eyes to see there were considerable grounds for apprehension. New political creeds were abroad which not only denied individual freedom as understood in democratic countries, but made a virtue of doing so. For the leaders in Russia and Italy the destruction of the principles of liberalism was more than a matter of expediency; it was essential for the health of

the new order of society. They insisted that, whereas Parliamentary democracy was the political form suited to the conditions of the nineteenth century, it was obsolete to-day: the institutions appropriate to the present age were now in process of creation. Thus it was becoming impossible for the supporters of democratic institutions to regard the new dictatorships as depending entirely on the personality of the dictators. They must meet the challenge of a vital political movement armed with a philosophy having its own very definite conception of the place of liberty in the social order.

The reality of the danger to the cause of liberty was finally brought home with irresistible force by the Hitler revolution in Germany in January, 1933. A great nation deliberately repudiated democracy, swung over to the crudest form of despotism, and trampled underfoot the most cherished ideals of nineteenth-century liberalism. Mussolini had originally declared that Fascism was not a commodity for export; Hitler was as vehement as Lenin had been in declaring himself to be the prophet of a new age, the creator of a political society which should put Germany in the forefront of progress. The repercussions of the German revolution were felt particularly in Austria, where the activities of a Nazi Party anxious for union with Germany caused Dr. Dollfuss, the Chancellor, to abrogate the powers of Parliament and establish his personal dictatorship. Before his assassination he had crushed Socialist opposition in Vienna, and instituted a new constitution embodying a corporative organisation on Italian lines.



§ 2 *Reactions in Great Britain, France, and the United States*

Of the great powers in Europe only Britain and France maintain the tradition of the liberal state, and even they have not escaped the impact of the disruptive forces set up by international hostility and economic chaos. Great Britain maintains the Parliamentary system with no outward change, but behind the façade the spirit of dictatorship has been at work. When the financial crisis occurred in 1931, British democracy was persuaded without difficulty to institute a virtual dictatorship by bringing in a so-called National Government. Mr. MacDonald and his colleagues had no political programme: they were content to ask for a free hand to do what seemed best in the circumstances. The nation responded by giving them a majority assuring them absolute power for five years. That the National Government has not used this opportunity with the determination of foreign autocracies is due rather to lack of will and of policy than to lack of power.

In France, the recent events connected with the Stavisky scandals, and particularly the riots in Paris, have opened the eyes of the world to the insecure position of the Third Republic. The unsatisfactory working of French political institutions and the popular distrust of politicians were well-known factors in the situation. But until the Stavisky episode neither foreign observers nor the French people themselves seemed to have

been aware of the extent of political corruption and the readiness of the Paris factions to man the barricades. The political crisis was solved by the creation of a Ministry of Public Safety headed by M. Doumergue, who proceeded on orthodox dictatorial lines to carry on government by decree.

In the great democracy of the West, changes of a most rapid and startling character have been brought about by the economic crisis. With the coming to power of President Roosevelt, the United States of America, so long the home of the most uncompromising individualism, suddenly underwent a vast transformation in the direction of socialisation. President Roosevelt was quickly armed with powers such as Mr. MacDonald would never have dreamed of claiming; and these powers were soon exerted to the full. In his first year of office he took control of the credit system of the nation; he abandoned the gold standard and set up the mechanism of a managed currency. He brought national industry under a series of codes designed to eliminate unfair competition and to raise wages. This involved official recognition of trade unions, and employers who had consistently refused to treat with union representatives were now induced to do so. The executive also took the first steps towards the co-ordination of national transport. In agriculture the Government took control of every act of the production, processing, manufacturing, and marketing of almost all staple and associated commodities. By drastic regulations concerning the working of the Stock Exchange

the President attacked some of the most deeply rooted traditions in American finance and put a severe check on the dangerous speculative tendencies. By the bold cancellation of Government contracts he struck at the graft that has for so long poisoned American political life.

In the carrying out of these drastic reforms practically by Presidential decree the trappings of democracy were indeed retained. The physical violence and the terrorism associated with European dictatorship were absent. The power of propaganda was found, in fact, to be equally effective. Intensive bombardment by Press and radio persuaded the American masses to desire the course of action already determined on by the administration. Modern technique for the creation of mass opinion was for the first time exercised to the full in a democratic state. Everything was done with due deference to constitutional forms: Mr. Roosevelt had reached his position through the normal procedure of election; Congress was called upon in the usual way to give its sanction; persuasion (as understood by practitioners in publicity), and not violence, brought about the necessary change in public opinion. But none the less President Roosevelt had joined the company of Stalin, Mussolini and Hitler.

An American correspondent writing just before the New Deal's first birthday said: "America is a nation altered almost beyond recognition. We have lost our monetary system, we have lost our individualist capitalism, we have abandoned the

idea of freedom which lay about us at the birth of a nation 'conceived in liberty,' we have consented to the weakening of State and local government for the benefit of a central authoritarian State, we have done such violence to our eighteenth-century constitution that it seems doubtful how long we can maintain diplomatic relations with it, and we have taken a long step towards embracing a new and unfamiliar morality. . . . Do we mean anything now when we still sing to our 'sweet land of liberty' and exhort God as the 'author of liberty' to make our land be 'bright with freedom's holy light', to 'let freedom ring' 'from every mountain side'? Have those conceptions lost their power?"<sup>1</sup>

Thus the impetus of the new movement away from free institutions comes not only from Russia, Italy, and Germany. In the surviving democracies themselves there are powerful influences at work undermining the liberal order hitherto established. In this country and in France there is growing dissatisfaction with Parliamentary government owing to its lack of decision in critical periods and its inadequacy in the sphere of economics. In England the active spirits of both the Right and the Left are becoming impatient of traditional democratic forms and are hankering after autocratic powers to be used for rapid action. The times are such that strong government seems more immediately important than individual freedom. The French democratic system has never worked well, and

<sup>1</sup> *The Round Table*, March, 1934.

the recent strain on the constitution has only called particular attention to defects that had long been obvious. The corruption and inefficiency of the deputies and the chronic instability of ministries has made even life-long republicans despair of the future. Thus M. Charles Benoist, at the end of a long political career, announces his conversion to a constitutional monarchy as the only way out.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the constitutional parties, by behaving as though they were unaware of the imminent dangers to which the present system is exposed, are playing into the hands of the extremists.

In a few short years, therefore, the political atmosphere of Europe has undergone a radical change. The struggle for liberty must begin over again. And it is not merely political freedom that is at stake. The whole cultural system associated with the liberal tradition is being attacked. In the new single-party states all the forces of education and propaganda are being directed to the one purpose of instilling the ideas on which the régime depends. Intellectual labour is oriented, not towards truth, but towards a dogmatic social philosophy. Ideas obnoxious to the Government, whether in politics, in art, or in literature, are as far as possible suppressed. The ordinary citizen in the new despotisms has become little more than a target for propaganda: he is conditioned to make the appropriate responses to the stimuli provided by Government.

<sup>1</sup> *Souvenirs de Charles Benoist. Tome troisième et dernier. 1902-1933.*

, § 3 *The Authoritarian Theory of Liberty*

It is unlikely that the founders of the new authoritarian states would have been able to accomplish their task if their attitude to the liberties won during the nineteenth century had been merely negative, and if the only ideal they set up was that of a strong and quick-acting executive. If the liberal idea of freedom was to be destroyed among those who think at all about these matters, it could only be done by putting another idea in its place. Fascist political doctrine found the necessary alternative in the idealist theory of the State deriving from Hegel. According to this theory, freedom—so far from being the absence of restraint—consists in obedience to the law of the community. The individual can realise his personality only as a member of a society. He is not an isolated unit; he lives, moves, and has his being as a member of a greater whole which has an organic life of its own from generation to generation. In serving the whole, therefore, he finds his highest expression. Liberty, it appears, is the positive result of harmonising the individual will with the general will—or the moral law—embodied in the State. This general will represents the highest part of ourselves—that which we should seek to realise if we were stripped of all petty selfishness. It follows that, in obeying the State, the individual is obeying his own best self. Mussolini has himself laid down the dogma of the State in his article on “The Political and Social

Doctrine of Fascism" contributed to the 14th volume of the *Enciclopedia Italiana*:—

"Fascism conceives of the State as an absolute, in comparison with which all individuals or groups are relative, only to be conceived of in their relation to the State. The conception of the Liberal State is not that of a directing force, guiding the play and development, both material and spiritual, of a collective body, but merely a force limited to the function of recording results: on the other hand, the Fascist State is itself conscious, and has itself a will and a personality—thus it may be called the 'ethic' State. . . . The State, as conceived of and as created by Fascism, is a spiritual and moral fact in itself, since its political, juridical and economic organisation of the nation is a concrete thing: and such an organisation must be in its origins and development a manifestation of the spirit. The State is the guarantor of security both internal and external, but it is also the custodian and transmitter of the spirit of the people, as it has grown up through centuries in language, in customs, and in faith. And the State is not only a living reality of the present, it is also linked with the past and above all with the future, and thus transcending the brief limits of individual life, it represents the immanent spirit of the nation."<sup>1</sup>

The same conception of the subordination of the individual will to the will of the State lies at the root of German National Socialist philosophy.

<sup>1</sup> English translation published in the *Political Quarterly*, July-September, 1933, pp. 352-353.

Here, however, a special twist is given by the insistence on the call of blood and race. Whereas the Hegelian State is an end in itself, the Nazi State exists to foster the purity of the "Aryan" race. Hitler has, moreover, given the most extreme practical form to Hegel's demand for an absolute ruler who shall realise the "personality of the State."

The Bolshevik practice of rule by a closely organised minority also finds its justification in the Hegelian idea. This minority government is not to be regarded as tyrannous: it gives expression to the real, but as yet unrevealed, will of the whole people. The Communist ruling-class acts in accordance with what the majority would in fact desire if their will were "free", that is, if they were aware of their true interests and were in a position to pursue a policy that would secure those interests.

#### § 4 *The Call to Action in Defence of Freedom*

There remain, however, a great many people for whom the paradox that the highest freedom consists in obedience to law has no appeal. If there is a mystical truth below the surface contradiction, they are unable to penetrate to it. In considering the relation between the individual and the State, they cannot refrain from putting the emphasis on the individual; they believe, in fact, that the State exists for man, and not man for the State. They realise that in modern conditions a certain amount of State interference with the individual



is inevitable, but they think that such interference should be kept at the minimum consistent with social welfare. Above all, they regard freedom of thought as essential to cultural health and human progress. It is not that they object to strong government in itself; on the contrary, they see that the great vice of modern democratic government is its feeble dependence on manufactured public opinion. What they do object to is a despotism based on a set of dogmas that no impartial and intelligent person could accept, and controlled by a group of political partisans posing as the repositories of infallible political wisdom.

Unfortunately, however, the convinced believers in liberty, particularly in this country, have become too much accustomed to take for granted the civil privileges they enjoy, and they may very well lose them simply because they are not sufficiently alive to the march of events and energetic in political action. After all, the present ills of the world call for drastic remedies, and the constitutional parties who profess to stand for liberty cannot indefinitely continue in a policy of hopeful inaction. High-sounding phrases extolling the virtues of an academic liberalism are very well in their way, but they scarcely carry conviction to the millions of unemployed living at bare subsistence level and to the millions more who fear that at any moment they may lose their jobs. If these millions are to be kept loyal to free institutions, social and economic reorganisation on a large scale is inevitable. If undertaken in time, the changes can be made with

due regard to the claims of the individual. Otherwise we may expect either a Fascist *coup* by organised Capitalism or a sudden and complete change-over to the Socialist State. In neither case, whatever its antecedent professions, is the revolutionary government likely to show much respect for individual liberty.

It is clear, therefore, that those who consider our traditional ideals worth preserving must abandon their attitude of passivity and combine for resolute action. The call comes with clearest force to intellectual workers in all fields. Scientists, scholars, artists, administrators, industrial leaders, teachers—all are vitally concerned to maintain the conditions essential for the continuance of their work. As a body they are solid in theoretical adherence to the doctrines of liberty. Yet far too often they stand aside from political strife and are ready in effect to let the world wag as it will. They may have, of course, a justifiable dislike of the conditions in the political arena, and a justifiable belief that, as democratic theory is at present interpreted in practice, anything they can do will have little weight in the balance. Again, research-workers and artists have a great temptation to regard their work as all in all. In a better world than ours it may be so. But let them look at what is happening to their fellows abroad. British universities are at present seeking to find occupation for scores of refugee academic workers who have learned in the harshest school that scholarship can be kicked aside like old lumber; and the various

organisations fostering the arts are giving hospitality to the many who have found the truth that art, in practice, by no means transcends political and racial limitations. The members of the cultured classes to whom freedom means most are not likely, of course, to agree on the practical solution of contemporary problems, but they may at least be expected to stand together to safeguard the principles on which any true culture depends.

But no action that we take in defence of freedom will be effective unless we first clarify our aims. The old liberal catch-words may well be dropped. Spencerian individualism is as dead as the economic individualism of the Manchester school. Vast economic changes and the enormous development of the means of propaganda have produced a set of conditions to which nineteenth-century theories are no longer adequate. For the earlier liberal thinkers and politicians the scheme of liberty was fairly simple and straightforward: intellectual liberty rested on a free Press; political liberty on the right to vote and to receive impartial justice; spiritual liberty on religious toleration; economic liberty on the right to combine in associations, on free contract, free competition, free trade. The most cursory examination of this scheme, however, shows its lack of correspondence in many points with the facts of twentieth-century life. The rights here claimed obviously cannot stand without considerable modification. Supporters of liberty to-day will no doubt have to surrender some of the positions

so strongly defended by the out-and-out individualists of the last century. Our object must be to strike a new balance between individual rights and social control and so to guarantee the essentials of human freedom in the life of to-day and to-morrow.

## CHAPTER II

### FREEDOM AND REASON

#### § 1 *The Revolt against Reason in the Political Despotisms*

IN considering the future of freedom we are dealing with what is fundamentally a cultural problem. The struggle for the political freedom which we now enjoy was the result of a state of mind,—the state of mind which manifested itself also in the desire to conduct human affairs according to the dictates of reason. The gradual establishment of the principle of freedom of thought and the growth of the scientific habit of mind were, in fact, two aspects of a single process. We may take it, therefore, that the continuance of freedom of thought and political action will depend on the perpetuation of the belief that social and political problems are capable of intellectual solutions. When people cease to believe that the free play of mind can avail them in the cause of human welfare, they have no choice but to take refuge in political dogma imposed by revolution and supported by force. The defence of freedom, therefore, includes the defence of reason.

The new autocrats have no doubt about the intimate connection between liberty and rational

thought; their attack is directed against both. Revolution, by which the dictatorships have been brought to birth, is in itself a conspicuous denial of reason. It commends itself to a man of action, of course, because it sweeps away the vested interests that are always present to resist and delay any serious changes, and it enables a new ruling class to be set up imbued with the revolutionary ideology. And in these days, when the condition of the world is such that speed seems to be the one essential in policy, it has especial appeal to the young and to those many idealists whose hearts are stronger than their heads. But if revolution confers benefits, it exacts its price. Part of the price is the silencing of reason by passion, and the other part is the suppression of liberty. The professed ultimate aim of the revolutionaries may be, for instance, "the complete freedom and equality of all men in a class-less society," but the immediate result of violent upheaval is a despotism whose main object must be the quelling of all opposition, and nobody can tell how long the period of repression may last. If the revolution involves a thorough-going change in the economic mechanism, the restrictions on liberty will be even more serious. The task of maintaining supplies of goods and services while rapid reorganisation is undertaken in accordance with hastily conceived plans is bound to lead to many forms of coercion, and the fear of the consequences of failure will cause the Government to treat the individual with even greater ruthlessness. Thus the violent

imposition of even the most reasonably conceived programme must have as its immediate effect the suspension of both reason and liberty.

But in the new anti-democratic states the denial of reason is far more than a temporary and accidental result of revolutionary conditions; it is inherent in the official programme itself. This is seen most conspicuously in Germany. In revolting against the liberal institutions as developed in the nineteenth century, the National Socialists revolted also against the rational attitude of mind which they associate with those institutions. The very fact that liberal doctrine has its roots in eighteenth-century rationalism and in science as applied to economics and politics made it for them a poisonous growth, and the more poisonous because it produces its proletarian variety of Marxism. Nazism is "a reaction against Jewish intellectualism and a return to instincts, intuition, and an organic conception of civilisation."<sup>1</sup> Its exponents have invented for themselves a new pseudo-history based on a mystical idea of race. In defiance of any reasonable examination of the facts they assert that the Aryan race holds a primary position among the races of the world, and that within it the Germanic race has a special mission to fulfil and is destined to assume the leadership of the world. The task of the National Socialists is to regenerate the German nation and to keep the racial blood pure by expelling all "non-Aryan"—particularly Jewish

<sup>1</sup> Herr Hitler, in a speech at the Cultural Conference, Nuremberg, 5th September, 1934.

—elements, for it is admixture of race that has produced the decay of the empires of the past. The length to which this humourless negation of reason can go is seen in the demand that even religion shall be remodelled in accordance with the new revelation of the Nordic man. The cardinal dogma in the gospel of national regeneration is the principle of leadership, and the authority of the Leader is maintained through a system of military discipline. Both in achieving their position and in maintaining it the Nazi party have exerted the power of propaganda in such a way as to exploit to the full the irrational element in human nature. In their effort to restore the national spirit they have deliberately inculcated the military virtues and glorified war. The hypnotic effect of their new mythology has hitherto been such as to enable them to dispense with a political and economic programme that would stand logical examination.

In Italy, too, the current ideology is anti-rational in character. The theory of the State that has been developed by Fascist philosophy is essentially mystical. An emotional mood appropriate to a renaissance of national life has been deliberately fostered, though it has not been carried to such lengths as in Germany. There is, too, an insistence on the need to be prepared for war, and the virtues of military courage and endurance are exalted. The militaristic side of Italian Fascism has received less prominence in the English press in recent years than at the



time when Signor Mussolini was still consolidating his position. But it would be a mistake to suppose that it has ceased to be important, and indeed fundamental. The Duce gave considered expression to his views on war in the official statement of Fascist ideology.—

“Fascism . . . believes neither in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace. It thus repudiates the doctrine of Pacifism—born of a renunciation of the struggle and an act of cowardice in the face of sacrifice. War alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it. All other trials are substitutes, which never really put men into the position where they have to make the great decision—the alternative of life and death. Thus a doctrine which is founded upon this harmful postulate of peace is hostile to Fascism. And thus hostile to the spirit of Fascism, though accepted for what use they can be in dealing with particular political situations, are all the international leagues and societies, which, as history will show, can be scattered to the winds when once strong national feeling is aroused by any motive—sentimental, ideal, or practical.”<sup>1</sup>

These ideas have subsequently been publicly reiterated by Signor Mussolini on more than one occasion. The statement which attracted most notice occurred in the speech which he delivered

<sup>1</sup> Article on “The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism”, in the *Enciclopedia Italiana*.

at the close of Army manœuvres in August 1934:—

“We are becoming—and shall become so increasingly because this is our desire—a military nation. A militaristic nation, I will add, since we are not afraid of words. To complete the picture, warlike—that is to say, endowed ever to a higher degree with the virtues of obedience, sacrifice, and dedication to country. This means that the whole life of the nation, political, economic, and spiritual, must be systematically directed towards our military requirements.”<sup>1</sup>

Such sentiments are more than flourishes of political rhetoric. They are backed by deeds. The military spirit has been carefully instilled into the young. The Balilla—the Fascist organisation of children—is now military in every detail. Detachments of boys from seven to eighteen years of age parade with rifles and machine-guns, give big displays, and attend annual camps.<sup>2</sup>

By the laws approved on the 18th September, 1934, this “pre-military” training of boys was made part of a comprehensive scheme by which every male citizen, besides being liable to conscription at the normal age, is to be under some form of military organisation from early boyhood until he is well on in manhood. The principle of this new legislation is that “within the Fascist State the functions of citizen and soldier are inseparable.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Times* report, 28th August, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 22nd May, 1934; 5th September, 1934.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 19th September, 1934.

The present régime in Russia has not the obvious anti-rational characteristics of German National Socialism or Italian Fascism. The Marxian programme is indeed derived from a logical analysis of the historical process, and it professedly proceeds on rigidly scientific lines. (On this very account it is anathema to both Mussolini and Hitler.) But in the practical application of this programme toleration, the hall-mark of reason in action, is completely excluded. No church could be more authoritarian than the Communist Party in its claim to possess the only key to salvation. It would seem, in fact, that whatever logical basis there may be for Marxism, the theory of the class-war has taken on the character of pure dogma, the acceptance of which can come only by way of mystical enlightenment. This is stated in so many words by a well-known English exponent of the Communist point of view:—

“It is impossible to achieve the ultimate, though always caustic, revolutionary optimism unless the mind has first been purged of the facile optimism of nineteenth-century liberalism. The necessity of an objective force incarnated by a special social class in order to achieve a new type of society, the futility of supposing that sweet reasonableness can solve the iron contradiction of our extant social order, these things cannot be understood unless some cauterising flame has passed over the mind.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Strachey: *The Coming Struggle for Power*, 1932, p. 227.

## § 2 *The Decline of Reason in Contemporary Culture.*

Many people who deplore the present widespread revolt against the rational treatment of human affairs are inclined to console themselves with the hope that this is merely a temporary phase, and that in time good sense will once more assert itself. They look upon the surge of irrationality as a direct consequence of the passions stirred by the War, and the resentment, the humiliation, and the intensified nationalism fostered by the Peace Treaties: as those feelings are allayed, so the attitude of mind which they have produced may be expected to pass. Unfortunately, however, the matter is not so simple as that. The root-cause of the phenomenon we are considering lies much deeper. It is to be found in those mysterious levels of human consciousness that determine the intellectual climate of the age.

With regard to Germany, where the cult of unreason has been carried to its farthest limits, it must be remembered that a strong element opposed to the primacy of reason had persisted in the national thought throughout the nineteenth century. Although the ideas making up the Nazi ideology have gained their power and prestige in the favourable atmosphere of defeat and humiliation, they are not new: they have their obvious sources in such writers as Fichte, Nietzsche, and Houston Chamberlain. But even outside Germany, among nations less disposed to philosophical mysticism, a change in the intellectual

climate had begun well before the War and was perhaps only accelerated by post-war political and economic chaos. In the early years of this century the view of mind and matter that had arisen during the great period of scientific discovery had already lost its old certainty, and there was a marked tendency to remove reason from the supreme place it had once occupied.

One of the chief factors in the change of attitude was the new psychology, which was putting forward a revolutionary conception of the human mind and its mode of functioning. According to the popularised version of the doctrines associated with Freud, Jung, and Adler, human action is determined by the instincts and desires deep down in the unconscious mind. We behave as we do, not because of a rationally directed will, but because of mysterious urges and impulses which frequently do not reveal themselves to our conscious mind, and which are always beyond our control. Thus the freedom of the will is an illusion. Reason, so far from being sovereign, is the slave of our instincts. Its function is to provide us with justifications for what we want to believe, and what we want to do.

It is not only in the extreme theories of the psycho-analysts that the rational element in human nature is reduced to insignificance; Prof. MacDougall, a psychologist of more moderate tendency, likewise regards the instincts as the determinants of behaviour; in his view also the most complex intellectual apparatus is only the instrument by

which native impulses seek satisfaction. The opposing school of modern psychologists, the Behaviourists, arrive at a similar denial of reason by a different route. They seek to interpret human behaviour without introducing the conception of mind at all; it is all a matter of responses to stimuli. The experiments in conditioned reflexes carried out with Pavlov's dogs are held to provide the starting point for theories which will completely account for a Beethoven symphony, Einstein's theory of relativity, Napoleon's career of conquest, and Ford's world-wide business. If only we knew enough about the science of conditioning we could produce the Brave New World of Mr. Aldous Huxley's imagination, or any other that we found more to our taste. In Behaviourism, the intellect as generally understood disappears altogether.

The glaring contradiction observable between the principal theories of modern psychology is in itself a criticism of the conclusions reached by the leading workers in this science, and it is not difficult to challenge the view which relegates the intellect to a position of complete dependence on the more primitive instincts. But I am not now concerned with criticism. The fact to which I want to call attention is that, whatever may be the validity of the new theories, they have rapidly gained currency in vulgarised forms and have had a profound effect on the outlook of this generation. They have undermined the faith in human will, they have shattered the old ethical sanctions, and, above all, they have induced

scepticism and distrust of rational methods of thought.

In recent philosophical inquiry there has been a strong movement parallel to that in psychology. In this connection the writings of Henri Bergson stand out as having had the most marked influence on popular ways of thinking. In reaction against the mechanistic theory summed up in the works of Herbert Spencer, the philosopher of the scientific movement of the nineteenth century, Bergson has created a system which lays great stress on intuition as against the intellect or intelligence from which has issued modern scientific knowledge. In his view, intelligence has developed as man's instrument in the construction and use of inorganic tools: it functions properly, therefore, in the material world. When it seeks to explain life, it leads us astray. For the understanding of the innermost secrets of life itself, we must make use of intuition, which is "instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely". Bergson, while limiting the sphere of the intellect, does not subordinate it entirely to intuition. In the vulgarised form in which his views have passed current, however, the intellect has been thrust more and more into the background, and supreme importance has been attached to mystical experience which gives immediate comprehension of reality.

The penetration of the public mind by such ideas as those of Bergson and the new psychology

has resulted in a new feeling towards literature and art.<sup>1</sup> Already before the War, M. Julien Benda noted with regret the changed attitude of the French leisured class in these matters.<sup>2</sup> He found that these people had come to demand in art something to stir the emotions rather than to stimulate the mind to intellectual pleasure. For them, art must work by intuition and must be essentially subjective.—“L’art, pour s’unir à l’âme des choses doit accéder à un *état de pur amour, où s’évanouit toute espèce d’activité intellectuelle.*” It must be a mystical union with the essence of things; it must deal with things in their intimate reality, and not in the distorted forms produced by the intelligence.—“Cette detestation violente, consciente et organisée, de l’intelligence,—‘intellectuel’ est presque devenu un terme de mépris dans nos salons,—constitue une chose tout à fait nouvelle dans une société française.” M. Benda observed that, with the exception of Anatole France, all the popular authors of the twenty years before the War were emotional in their appeal. It seemed that literature of a restrained and rational character had lost all æsthetic value for French society. Such an attitude was specially remarkable in the descendants of those who received so enthusiastically the writings of La Bruyère and Montesquieu.

<sup>1</sup> It is significant that Prof. Herbert Read, in seeking a philosophy of modern art, finds it in Bergson’s detached pronouncements on æsthetics. See *Art Now*, pp. 53–56.

<sup>2</sup> *Belphégor : essai sur l’esthétique de la présente société française*. Published 1918, but mostly written before the War.



In the years immediately after the War the revolt against reason was to go much farther in French literary and artistic circles than M. Benda is likely to have foreseen in 1918. First, in cynical repulsion from the horrors and futilities of the War came the bitter, hysterical negation of Dada, —a movement of sheer anarchy that by its very nature could not last long. Out of it, however, developed the more vital movement of Surréalisme, whose first manifesto was written by André Breton. The Surréalistes derive essentially from Freud. They are preoccupied with the life of the unconscious, through which they believe they can reach a new world of superior reality. They are concerned not only with literature and art, but with ethics and metaphysics. According to a sympathetic exposition of their views by M. Henri Fluchère,<sup>1</sup> it is in the unconscious that “are to be found the deepest truths which alone deserve to be expressed through any means man may have in his possession. Language is one of those means, along with painting, design, sculpture, architecture, the cinema, music, etc., all that is usually called art. But art is not an end in itself. . . . Art is a means of expressing a human condition, no matter what it be. Now a human condition must, to be expressed as it really is, escape ‘*une mise en bouteille par la raison*’. Reason is antagonistic to the spirit. It is constantly turned towards the useful, and mechanically quenches any gratuitous impulse of the spirit: it has extended

<sup>1</sup> *Scrutiny*, December, 1932.

its wasteful sway even into a field where above all it should have remained a stranger. . . . The association of thoughts or images must not be led by the cold and dry tool of logical reason which itself works under the control of all manner of pre-occupations foreign to the normal character of expression, . . . but the mind must purge itself of its contents, just as a tank is emptied by the natural flow of water under the pressure of the law of gravitation." The aim of the movement is stated as being to purify man through the re-introduction of the marvellous into life.

Surréalisme and kindred doctrines have, of course, established themselves far beyond their countries of origin. In literature and the arts there is now a powerful tendency to abandon logical form and allow free play to the random workings of the unconscious. The contemporary English poets who, according to an influential school of criticism are most significant, despise logical coherence and make play with the free association of ideas. In their work images and reflections succeed one another in a psychological context which the reader is presumably supposed to be able to penetrate by an intuitive sympathy with the subconscious life of the poet. Meaning is frequently almost entirely abandoned; the poet moves in a realm of mystical experience in which communication is impossible. Even when individual parts of a poem are intelligible, the logical connections are omitted so that the work as a whole lacks the intellectual content hitherto

regarded as an essential part of a work of literature. The poem which is generally claimed as the most important production of recent years—T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*—defies the efforts of even the most friendly critics to hit upon an agreed explanation of what it means.

Similar tendencies are at work in the English novel as written by those who are most anxious to insist on the "contemporary" quality of their work. Present-day subjective novelists turn aside from the logically constructed plots and rounded characters of former times and occupy themselves in setting out what they conceive to be the whole content of a human mind, mingling conscious desires and coherent thought-processes with the trivial and apparently meaningless stirrings of the unconscious just as they come. Instead of selecting significant events, they detail all the disconnected series of happenings that impinge more or less insistently on the attention of a given human being. Reveries and day-dreams are described with the minuteness of a psychological laboratory study. This method has been used with restraint and success by Virginia Woolf, and with more ruthless application of theory by James Joyce, whose *Ulysses*, which is supposed to set out the acts, thoughts, and feelings of the leading character in a single day, has been acclaimed as a masterpiece by some and condemned as hopeless rubbish by others. In his later writings Joyce is finding the task of revealing the unconscious so difficult that he has to invent a new language.

More important than Joyce, because less recondite and in much of his work less blatantly eccentric, is D. H. Lawrence, who even before his untimely death had become the object of a cult. In his distrust of the intellect and his emphasis on the unconscious—particularly the sexual element in the unconscious—he derives directly from Freud. His savage impatience with the shackles of civilisation, his demand for the free expression of instinctive desires, and his search for happiness in a return to the primitive have made a strangely profound impression on the present generation. In *The Plumed Serpent* he told the story of the rebirth of a stagnant people through the efforts of a few individuals who allowed themselves to become the vehicles of mysterious cosmic forces operating not through the mind but through the blood. Many young people seem to find in such work a profound political significance.

His *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, at once the product and the attempted explanation of the workings of the solar plexus, was thrown with careless defiance to those critics whose only equipment is the intellect: they were not expected or invited to appreciate it. This work, which contains a few grains of wheat in an intolerable deal of chaff, is almost unreadable by any save those who are ready to swallow Lawrence's personally invented account of psycho-physical processes. Yet there are devotees among whom it is regarded as the best book on education produced since the War.

In painting the anti-rational movement is equally strong. Surréalisme, as represented in the work of such artists as Max Ernst, Joan Miró and Salvador Dali, explores the hidden depths of the mind, and brings together in a picture objects which are indeed sometimes recognisable, but which have no logical context. Subjectivism carried to its furthest limit is seen in one of the phases of the work of Picasso. Here intuitive perception is given free rein and the result is a canvas covered with lines and shapes that have no likeness to anything in the world of appearance. We are at the opposite pole to that of, say, eighteenth-century art, when logical organisation was an essential in picture-making. It is of interest to watch M. Picasso in the throes of creation as they are described by M. Zervos:—

“The moments of creation with Picasso are dominated by anguish. This anguish Picasso analysed for me recently. His only wish has been desperately to be himself; in fact, he acts according to suggestions which come to him from beyond his own limits. He sees descending upon him a superior order of exigences, he has a very clear impression that something compels him imperiously to empty his spirit of all that he has only just discovered, even before he has been able to control it, so that he can admit other suggestions. Hence his torturing doubts. But this anguish is not a misfortune for Picasso. It is just this which enables him to break down all his barriers, leaving the field of the possible free to him, and opening

up to him the perspectives of the unknown." Mr. Herbert Read, who quotes this passage in *Art Now*,<sup>1</sup> comments, rather naïvely: "I think that is as clear as we can expect a description of such processes to be." It is certainly as clear as the results of the process.

Mr. Read has encouraged the artists of the advanced group known as *Unit One* to talk about their aims and methods.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Ben Nicholson, a young artist whose abstract paintings have a certain vogue, and in whose work (according to Mr. Read) "the plastic arts do really attain to the condition of music," writes thus:

"One can take a board & paint it white, & then on top put a tar black & then on that, a grey & then a small circle of scarlet—then scrape off some grey, leaving black, some black leaving white, some white leaving board, some board leaving whatever is behind & some of that leaving whatever is behind that—only stopping when it is all form & depth & colour that pleases you most, exactly more than anything has ever pleased you before, something that pleases you even more than pleases yourself then you will have a living thing as nice as a poodle with 2 shining black eyes."

I am not sure whether the strangeness of Mr. Nicholson's literary style reflects the mood of his painting, or whether it arises merely because he is handier with the brush than the pen; but he manages to convey that this painting business

<sup>1</sup> pp. 123-124.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Read: *Unit One*, 1934.

is all delightfully simple. You have only to eliminate the idea of logical organisation, give free rein to spontaneous impulse, and there you are!

It is unnecessary here to examine in detail the various phases of the present revolt against the intellectualised art-forms characteristic of an old civilisation. It is worth while mentioning, however, the current interest in the work of primitive and savage peoples. Critics and artists alike turn to negro sculpture or Polynesian wood-carving—and also to the art of children—in the attempt to recover the naïve simplicity of the primal creative impulse. They claim that more is to be learned about the essential nature of art from these simple forms of self-expression than from the highly sophisticated and rational products of modern times.

How far irrationalism has penetrated the world of art can be readily gathered from Mr. Read's *Art Now*, a survey of contemporary painting which, immediately it appeared, was acclaimed in influential quarters as an authoritative work of permanent value. Most of the pictures discussed and reproduced in this volume completely defy the intellectual approach, and seem indeed quite meaningless to any except the fortunate few whose unconscious mind may be presumed to have some mysterious affinity with that of the artists.

The partial eclipse of reason observable in literature and the arts has its counterpart in other phases of contemporary life. It is plain in religion. The great spread of Anglo-Catholicism in England

represents a turning away from the distinctively Protestant form of Christianity having a pseudo-rational basis in revealed evidence to a religion exalting authority and tradition and having as its cardinal element the mystical experience derived through the sacrament. Distrust of reason also accounts largely for the great increase in the number of English converts to the Roman Church in recent years. Believers can, of course, find a satisfying logical system in the Catholic doctrine, if they need it. There can be little doubt, however, that what attracts the majority of converts is the prospect of finding refuge in authority from a world which they find too difficult to face with no help but reason.

A more spectacular manifestation of a growing divorce between reason and religion has been given in the rapid growth of the Oxford Group Movement. This new brand of religion, beginning from the hopelessly illogical position of eschewing dogma, makes to seemingly intelligent people the same kind of appeal that the Salvation Army makes to the unsophisticated masses. Intellectual problems are ignored in order that converts may wallow in testimony and confession of a kind that has obvious connections with the method of psycho-analysis and subjective art.

The various streams I have mentioned together produce a strong anti-rational current in contemporary thought. Paradoxically enough, this current has received a tributary from the realm of reason itself, namely, modern science. A generation or two ago it seemed that, even if we could know



nothing about the ultimate nature of matter, the behaviour of matter could be rationally apprehended in terms of fixed laws. Now, however, even the principle of determinism does not remain impregnable. The latest researches of the physicists have led to formulæ expressing probabilities rather than exact information; and the apparently uncaused and lawless behaviour of individual electrons has led some investigators to wonder whether the universe can ultimately be brought under rational laws. When the scientists expatiate in the rarified atmosphere of metaphysical speculation, the layman who toils painfully behind them may be forgiven if in the end he comes to doubt whether the reason of the mathematicians or physicists is any surer guide in these matters than the dogmas on which the various religious cosmogonies have been based. And even if we leave metaphysics out of the question, specialised work in mathematics and the sciences has become so severely technical that it has got right outside the range of the ordinary educated man; he cannot understand the results, much less follow the antecedent arguments. It is not surprising, therefore, that the puzzled layman, realising how many matters are too high for him, should begin to wonder whether he can trust his reason even in the less lofty realms of thought.

### § 3 *Reason the Bulwark of Freedom*

I began this discussion by stressing the intimate connection between freedom and the rational

attitude of mind. As we trace some of the currents of anti-rational tendency observable to-day, it may seem on a superficial view that the connection is not a necessary one. The artist who casts off the convention of logical organisation which an earlier age held to be essential, and becomes the mouthpiece of the unconscious and the recorder of the fleeting impressions of the senses, appears to move in a new world of freedom—not to say licence. D. H. Lawrence, for instance, in spite of his advocacy of thinking with the belly instead of with the brain, was as thorough-going an individualist as one could wish. But personal freedom has to be achieved in a social environment. However desirous he may be to live his own life in his own way, the artist or the thinker who undermines faith in human reason is in fact attacking the social fabric within which his individual freedom is possible. As soon as the denial of the intellect is taken beyond the realm of artistic creation and personal living into the sphere of social life the result must be either anarchy or autocracy. If we reject a rationally organised society, we can have only a world of warring individuals living by personal impulse or a community subject to the will of a leader claiming special inspiration. And since none but a few exceptional people can put up with anarchy, authoritarian rule is accepted.

What, then, should be the attitude of those who have not lost faith in human reason as the instrument of social organisation? In the first

place, of course, we should seek to understand, as far as possible, the nature of the instrument we are using. We must realise that it has limitations to which the nineteenth-century liberals were blind. Reason is latest among the powers of mankind to be evolved, and it is still without any great influence on the conduct of the majority of people. In all of us it is inseparably linked with a powerful complex of instincts and primitive strivings, and we know how these obscure and often concealed feelings will deflect it from its course. The need for harmony between intellect and basic feeling is also a matter of experience. The new psychology has made us aware of the subtle forms that rationalisation may take, and we have become almost too prone to assume that the wish is father to the thought. Recently acquired knowledge about the mind should therefore make us more than ever careful in our private thinking to distinguish between rational processes and their spurious substitutes. In the world of practical affairs it should make us see the limits within which rational appeal can be successful and hence the true place of propaganda in the art of government.

But while recognising the imperfections of human reason, we must firmly and publicly resist those who would completely deny its efficacy. The psychological doctrines that reduce the intellect to a cipher are merely theories, and theories which lack even the basis of objectively observed fact characteristic of the physical sciences; moreover,

no one of them commands the unqualified assent of the general body of students of the subject. There is no doubt, of course, that the leaders of the modern schools of psychology have brought to light some really new and important facts about the working of the mind, and it is the recognition of this that has caused their theories to gain such wide currency. But their conclusions, if uncritically accepted and pushed too far, can only produce a feeling of fatalism and helplessness in face of the problems of the world. If we are all the prey of unconscious instinctual desires which we cannot control, there is nothing we can do except sit still and wait for the return of Chaos and Old Night. If reason can never prevail, any other form of political action than brute violence is sheer futility.

As a matter of fact, Freud himself does not deny the ultimate efficacy of reason. He adopts the strictly scientific position, and regards himself as carrying scientific principles of investigation into a new realm. In *The New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, he says: "Intellect . . . or rather, to call it by a more familiar name, reason—is among the forces which may be expected to exert a unifying influence upon men. . . . Our best hope for the future is that the intellect—the scientific spirit, reason—should in time establish a dictatorship over the human mind."<sup>1</sup>

In order to restore faith in the power of human intelligence, however, merely negative resistance

<sup>1</sup> p. 219.

is insufficient. We must become more positive and aggressive. We must seek by deliberate effort of will to stem the tide of irrationality that is threatening to engulf our culture. In this respect, criticism has a part to play extending beyond the bounds of the specific arts and sciences with which it deals. It should acquire a new forthrightness in dealing with those movements that depend on an exaggeration of the non-rational elements in personality. Our mentors in the higher journalism are far too ready to accept incoherence and unintelligibility as profundity. Mortally afraid of being thought old-fashioned, they cease even to look for meaning in art. The youngest and rawest novelty-monger in poetry or painting can win their sympathetic consideration if he has the sense to bleat loud enough about the essentially "contemporary" quality of his art. In fact, if only a new work can be shown to have a character which any previous age would have rejected with scorn, they seem to think it superfluous to inquire whether it is good or bad. Thus, by feebly truckling to fashion and relying on the latest psychological and philosophical shibboleths, they deny the very faculty on which their trade of criticism depends. A little straight speaking and wholesome castigation would do a good deal towards restoring the prestige of reason in the realm of culture.

In the particular sphere of politics, the representatives of the liberal tradition must be far more active in working out a constructive policy. At

present they leave it to the dictators or would-be dictators to grapple with the tasks which they are apparently afraid to tackle. Yet it is obvious that the only way to recreate faith in intellectual solutions is to find them. The free nations must mobilise human ability and moral energy, and organise research for a frontal attack on the political and social problems that have so far baffled us. They must make it clear to all that the full resources of the human mind are being employed for the general welfare. They must not be afraid to act on the solutions that are found, even when the action required involves drastic changes. And so that action may be effective, they must be prepared to overhaul the whole machinery of government.

## CHAPTER III

### THE APPEAL OF DICTATORSHIP

#### § I *The Vitality of the New Autocracies*

IN any scientific analysis of the trend of national life, it would obviously be impossible to dismiss the dictatorships of to-day as merely deplorable aberrations from the path of political virtue. It is no doubt true that the rapid and widespread growth of the authoritarian principle is the result partly, as we have seen, of a favourable intellectual climate, and also, we may add, of a soil in which democratic institutions have never properly taken root. But we should deceive ourselves if we supposed that the flourishing condition of the plant is due mainly to the forcing process brought about by an atmosphere of anti-rationalism and international disorder. It has, in fact, a natural vigour which even those who dislike it most cannot fail to recognise. The nations that have turned away from Parliamentary forms are all, to a greater or less degree, seeking to realise in practice certain ideas which they regard as of supreme importance, and for which they are perfectly willing to sacrifice a large measure of personal freedom.

In the nature of the case it is difficult to get at the real mind of the peoples who have submitted

to the new régimes. To some observers, their enthusiasm for their professed ideals will seem spontaneous and even admirable; to others it will appear—so far as the masses are concerned—rather as a forced response to despotic stimulus. Certainly, however, the defenders of liberty are generally so much concerned about the obviously disagreeable features of the authoritarian states that they are unwilling to give proper recognition to those features that are of vital significance. Yet the body politic in the democratic communities is not in such a healthy condition that we can afford to neglect the experience of other societies. It may well be that as part of the cure for our present weaknesses we may have to submit to a certain dosage of the medicines so plentifully administered by the dictators.

### § 2 *The Strength of a Compelling Idea*

In the first place, we must note that the new autocracies have a common and fundamental characteristic in that they have been brought into existence by, and are the expression of, a compelling idea. The party programme on which the Government has come into power is something more than a political manifesto; it is a crusading creed. It is presented to the nation with the fullest possible emotional force and in terms calculated to awake the enthusiasm of those who look beyond immediate political action to ultimate human betterment. Bolshevism, Fascism, and Hitlerism all aspire to the validity of religion. And this in



more than a figurative sense. It is an essential part of all these movements to control national culture, and especially to capture the young in order to train them into convinced members of the Party. In every case the educational programme has caused conflict with orthodox religion. There was considerable trouble between the Vatican and Signor Mussolini over the training of the Italian youth. Herr Hitler is having similar difficulty owing to his treatment of the Catholic youth associations and his insistence on bringing everyone under Nazi tutelage. Where he thought he could safely do so he has gone even further: he has reorganised the Protestant churches in accordance with the Nazi policy of centralisation and has appointed his own ecclesiastical dictator. Meanwhile his lieutenant, Herr Rosenberg, has been busy spreading a new form of religion in which Christian doctrine is suitably blended with Nazi race-theory. The Bolsheviks, of course, began with a direct onslaught on the established religion and have continued a vigorous Anti-God campaign ever since. "The opium of the people" has been removed, but something which relies on a similar appeal has been substituted: the embalmed body of the canonised Lenin has become the goal of pilgrims, and Communist workers are fortified by the promise of Paradise on this earth. One religion has been put down only to make room for another. Thus the new political doctrines in Italy, Germany, and Russia are far more than a set of ideas to which the individual may give

a lukewarm intellectual assent: they are emotionally-charged principles providing an overmastering motive for thought and service. The individual is made to feel that in working for the Party he is contributing to a great national awakening that will inaugurate a new order.

We may dislike the dictators' shameless use of propaganda in exploiting the emotional appeal. We may deplore the state of hysteria to which the German people must have been reduced before it could be made to swallow the hotch-potch of economic inconsistencies, military heroics, and twaddle about race that constituted the National Socialist programme. We may hold that no lasting good can come from such a negation of reason. At the same time, however, we cannot be indifferent to the enormous political strength that arises from the infusion of a single energising idea. And we may find hope in the fact that emotional enthusiasm can be directed into other channels than inflated nationalism: it can, for instance, be made the driving force of an economic plan such as is transforming the face of Russia.

In contrast to the dictatorships, the democracies are characterised by a political apathy which bodes ill for the future of free institutions. The majority of the people are without any vital political faith. In this country the nineteenth-century movement for political equality has attained its object, and its energy has been diverted to the Socialist cause, which seeks equality in the economic sphere. But the Socialist attack on private property

has never enlisted the support of more than a minority of enthusiasts. It is true that the kind of Socialism that issues in ameliorative social legislation and state regulation of industry has evoked genuine faith and idealism; but it seems to have had its day. Or rather, it has entered into the policy of all parties, so that even Conservative ministers now cheerfully introduce schemes that their predecessors a generation ago would have damned as rank revolution. Up to a point we are all Socialists nowadays. As a distinct movement Socialism has reached a critical stage owing to the example of Russia and the manifest sickness of the capitalist system. Nothing less than the full programme of total abolition of private property in the means of production and the creation of a new economic order will now serve as a rallying cry. This would in all probability mean violent revolution, for it is extremely unlikely that the owners of capital would submit to expropriation by the ordinary methods of legislation. No doubt a certain number of English Socialists are prepared to fight, if necessary, to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. But I do not believe that the bulk of the adherents of the Labour-Socialist movement are sufficiently anxious for the extinction of the existing system to go to such lengths. Trade union leaders and social reformers have for long drugged themselves and their followers with Marxian phraseology, but in face of a situation in which they may be called upon to bring into actuality the system of their dreams, they become hesitant

and doubtful. Apart from the Socialist movement, the chief signs of political vitality are to be seen in the Fascist group. In spite of a muddled and imitative programme, Sir Oswald Mosley has managed by skilful propaganda to attract a large number of young people to his ranks. But I doubt whether party-methods of the kind elaborated in Germany will in the long run be successful in England.<sup>1</sup> We are therefore left with the great body of citizens of moderate opinion, including the more progressive of those who call themselves Conservatives, those who still follow the Liberal flag, and many of those who generally vote Labour. It is the people in this broad group who determine the general character of our political policy, simply because by sheer numbers they sway the elections. But at present they lack both leadership and an effective programme. They find little inspiration in the traditional doctrines of the parties to which they nominally belong, and they naturally obtain no emotional satisfaction from election manifestos based on mere expediency. Thus, as the bulk of the people are untouched by seriously revolutionary ideas, and as the constitutional parties are powerless to inspire enthusiasm, our political life is without a compelling faith leading to effective action.

<sup>1</sup> In suggesting that neither Socialism nor Fascism is likely to make much headway as a party of open revolution in England, I am assuming for the moment that the economic situation becomes no worse than now,—a condition which is anything but certain. As I insist elsewhere, either of these movements may have to be seriously reckoned with if the parties of the Centre prove unable to effect a radical improvement.

### § 3 *The Principle of Leadership*

The authoritarian states have not only developed dynamic energy in popular sentiment but they have brought this energy under the direction of strong leadership. The dictator of the old style imposed his will on a reluctant populace by brute military force or through a privileged governing class. His successor to-day, while insisting on his own special mission and the supreme political virtue of his party, uses every means of propaganda to secure the active support of the whole nation. The governed are encouraged to give their full co-operation, although they are made to understand that those who govern know their job and must be allowed to control policy and prescribe aims. The dictator himself dominates the nation not as an irresponsible autocrat but as the fountain of political wisdom. We may think that the process by which Hitler is raised aloft before popular imagination comes absurdly near apotheosis, and we may be touched with amused incredulity as we watch the superb confidence with which he and his henchmen set about the task of complete "national reconstruction." But in view of the experience of Italy we cannot deny that strength in the leader and willingness to submit to leadership can give a nation a new confidence and a new efficiency in government.

The principle of leadership is one with which the democracies have become too little familiar. In their revulsion from despotism they have tended

to withhold deference where deference is due. They have thought more about the checks to be placed on government than about the support essential to it. Yet in the modern world, unless those in charge of affairs have some independence and a certain freedom of action, efficient political organisation is impossible. The questions to be decided by authority become more and more complex and less and less amenable to mass decision. Successful solution is conditional upon the proper use of expert advice; and mistakes have momentous consequences. If the present partial paralysis of democratic government is to be cured, the people must first elect competent leaders and then allow them much more initiative and power of decisive action than at present.

Unfortunately one of the greatest deficiencies of modern democracies consists in their failure to produce leaders competent to deal with the tasks set them, and with the courage needed to make unpopular decisions. The whole system tends to discourage the right sort of men from entering political life. And if by good luck the right men do get to the head of affairs, the machinery of government effectually prevents them from doing much. President Roosevelt is a portentous exception in his readiness to accept responsibility for a frankly experimental and dangerous course of policy. Moreover, it is significant that in order to do what he believes to be best, he has had to override the ordinary political machinery and assume dictatorial power.

### § 4 *Discipline*

It follows from the importance attached to leadership in the non-democratic states that there should be great insistence on the spirit of discipline throughout national life. The discipline unfortunately takes on a military character, especially in Germany, but it is possible to regard this as an accidental feature. Living as we do in a world that is repenting of nineteenth-century individualism that meant each for himself and the devil take the hindmost, we ought not to underestimate the value of the right sort of discipline. As we watch President Roosevelt's efforts to drag a great nation out of the slough of despond and to create an economic system more in harmony with twentieth-century needs, we see how much of his difficulty is due to the conflict of a multitude of interests that have never been accustomed to work together in a common purpose. He has to confront industrialists brought up in the tradition of the crudest *laissez-faire* principles, workers who have never learned to organise themselves, investors of all classes who have come to look upon industrial capital as the proper sphere of the gambler, politicians who are only too ready to sacrifice public duty at the call of graft, and a nation at large among whom respect for law has fallen to a very low ebb. Here the results of past indiscipline are visible on the grandest scale. In France, the pull of sectional interests, the purely selfish pressure of constituents upon deputies, and the partisan

manœuvres of the many conflicting groups in the Chamber make Parliamentary government almost unworkable. In England, public life is less vitiated by crude commercialism than it is in America, and we contrive to bring more of the team-spirit into politics than do the French, but there are obvious ways in which the community would be the better for disciplined behaviour. Consider, for instance, some of the less important matters such as conduct on the roads, the disfigurement of the countryside, the menace to town-life of unregulated speculative building, and the selfish indulgence in noise. In dealing with these problems it is customary for politicians and newspaper men to "trust the good sense of the average man": it is apparently only necessary to point out to him that he is behaving unsocially and he will forthwith mend his ways. Unfortunately this good sense proves to be of little use unless it is fortified by a discipline which must be imposed from above. The fact is that, as life in the industrialised nations becomes more and more corporate in character, and the individual has multiplied opportunities of making himself a nuisance, the willingness to sink personal wishes in a common purpose is increasingly necessary to social welfare. It is to the credit of the Bolsheviks, Fascists, and Nazis that they realise this and make discipline a cardinal element in social reconstruction.

The virtues of disciplined action are seen most conspicuously in the party organisation which is another distinctive feature of the totalitarian



states. "The Party," as conceived by the dictators, is indeed a political development that deserves the most careful study by democratic politicians. A new instrument of government has been created, taking the form of a body of firm believers linked together by intense devotion to the cause and ready to be used as the spear-head of action. This is such an important innovation that I venture to give a brief account of the Bolshevik Party, which was the first to be established, and which has clearly provided the model for the Italian Fascists and the German Brown Shirts.

The Russian Communist Party is an organisation existing apart from the system of political soviets and the various bodies controlling economic affairs; that is to say, state officials and elected representatives are not necessarily members of the Party, although in the higher ranks of the hierarchy the greater proportion are. Yet the one and a half million Party members scattered through the Soviet Union in their 50,000 "cells" hold in their hands the real power of government. Every occupational and social institution—every factory, mine, farm, railway, university, hospital, ship, regiment, and so on—has one or more cells formed by admitted members of the Party. Each cell has its president and secretary, and, if large enough, a whole-time salaried official paid out of Party funds. While not giving orders to the organisation in which it is embedded, the cell carries on a persistent campaign by persuasion and personal example in order to make the organisation conform

to the requirements of Party policy as set out in the general "directives" issued from headquarters. All the cells in a single factory or other institution nominate representatives to a Party committee, which determines common action within the factory or institution. Again, all Party members who find themselves elected to any representative body such as a village soviet form themselves into a "fraction" which in its private meetings decides on a common line of action to which all members must conform. By means of delegates sent from local committees and isolated cells to district committees, from district committees to provincial committees, and from provincial committees to the Party Congress, a national pyramidal hierarchy is built up. At the apex of the pyramid, as the effective governing authority, is the Central Executive Committee of the Party Congress of the U.S.S.R. This standing committee, with its huge headquarters in Moscow, supervises and controls the conduct of Party members throughout the country.

It is important to make clear that the Communist Party is not a party in the sense in which the word is used in other countries. It does not include the whole body of adherents to Communist doctrine or all those who are willing to pay the party subscription. It is a carefully selected and limited body of persons, mostly between twenty-five and fifty, now chosen largely from the proletarian members of the League of Communist Youth, who have already undergone preliminary training.

So far from wishing to make the membership of the party co-extensive with citizenship, the Communist Party in Russia deliberately restricts numbers by periodical expulsions for political heresy, misconduct, or failure to obey orders. Members pledge themselves to responsibilities and duties from which the ordinary citizen is free; they are admitted only after a period of probation; they can never voluntarily abandon their privileged position. They must not only adhere strictly to the declared Communist faith but they must be ready to perform without question any work assigned to them. Further, they must undertake, in addition to their daily work, a special burden of "voluntary" unpaid service. Their salary in any political, administrative, or clerical office, is limited to a stated maximum, and of all extraneous earnings, such as from authorship, they must pay a considerable proportion to the Party funds. In its insistence on obedience, poverty, and complete devotion to the cause, the Communist body bears a very obvious resemblance to the religious orders of the Catholic Church.

The Party itself is only the final product of a wide organisation. Behind the Party members stand some half a million candidates for membership, mostly men and women between twenty-five and forty undergoing a period of probation that may last as long as five years. Then comes the League of Communist Youth (Comsomols), two or three millions of young people between seventeen and twenty-five organised according to a system

parallel to that of the Party itself. It is their duty to improve their own qualifications for "constructive work", and to undertake voluntary social service of every kind; and, of course, they meet constantly for business and discussion. Next, there are the Pioneers,—boys and girls between ten and seventeen, who also have their own self-governing organisation, and who aim at promotion into the Comsomols. Finally, there are the Octobrists, the children from eight to ten whose interests are being directed into the Communist channel. Thus the Party itself is supported by a body of candidates and aspirants at least five times its own number.<sup>1</sup>

The creators of this organisation have introduced features which will be repellant to liberal minds, but they have none the less displayed essential political wisdom. They know that only a small proportion of men and women can be fired with zeal for political ends and induced to sacrifice their own comfort for the well-being of the community. They know also that such a minority, if properly organised, can be made a far more efficient instrument of government than the flaccid and inconstant majorities on which the democracies rely. They realise, too, that political rights and privileges mean much more when they have to be hardly won than when they are automatically conferred, and for this second

<sup>1</sup> I have based this account of the Communist Party on an article by Mr. Sidney Webb (Lord Passfield) in the *Political Quarterly*, January–March, 1933.

reason they are prepared to keep the majority outside the Party ranks. And they are surely right in their assumption that the only kind of individual political activity that is worth while is that which springs from genuine interest, from specific training, and from a keen desire to serve.

In pitiful contrast, we of the democracies put our trust in the collective voice of the millions who never think about political questions from one year's end to another, and who can be induced to go to the polling-booth only by the full pressure of newspaper and radio propaganda.<sup>1</sup> We make no attempt to organise those possessing political ability and energy into a special corps devoted to planning and carrying out social tasks. The so-called political parties require only a subscription as the qualification for membership, and as organs of political training they are almost negligible. Bound as we are by amateurism, ignorance, and apathy, it is no wonder that we quail before the difficulties now confronting us.

### § 5 *Experiment in Political and Economic Organisation*

The leading principles which I have described find expression in specially devised political institutions of a kind very different from those which Englishmen and Americans are accustomed to think of as normal in civilised Western communities. The new forms of government of

<sup>1</sup> Only recently the House of Commons was occupied in discussing a private member's bill to make voting compulsory.

course violate all the traditional ideas of civil liberty; but it does not follow that they are unworthy of study and even, in some respects, of imitation. It can be said, I think, that they at any rate tackle some of the most serious problems confronting twentieth-century government,—problems which the democracies have hitherto either shirked or dealt with in the most opportunist, partial, and haphazard fashion.

First, and of fundamental importance, is the question of the relationship of political to economic power. During the past century, as ever larger areas of the world have become industrialised and been made dependent on other areas for supplies of raw materials and for markets for their finished goods, the economic factor has acquired a dominating importance in national and international life. Business corporations have grown in power and wealth to such an extent as to offer serious challenge to the political government under which they live. It is their activities that have transformed the lives of millions and raised most of the bewildering problems that Parliaments have to face. In the early stages of the industrial revolution the English Parliament took little account of what the business men were doing; it left the new social problems alone in the hope that they would solve themselves; it conceived its main function to be that of securing to the individual the right to do what he liked with his own. But as the evils of the industrial system grew too gross to be overlooked, Government took a hand in

regulating and restricting the activities of the entrepreneurs. As time went on, the area of State interference increased enormously. Not only were whole industries subjected to statutory control, but a great body of social legislation at once put limits to what might be done for private profit and imposed on the industrialists the taxation out of which social services were to be financed. To-day most of the time of Parliament is occupied with economic matters, and it is taken for granted that Government initiative and assistance, coupled with suitable regulative action, shall be forthcoming in response to any reasonable demand from national industry. In America the policy of *laissez-faire* lasted much longer than in Great Britain. It was the pride of the United States that the Government kept its finger out of the industrial pie and allowed business to develop along its own lines in its own way. In this paradise of private enterprise, although there were sporadic interferences such as those which came from the anti-trust legislation, the State was not compelled to intervene on any decisive or spectacular scale until the complete breakdown of unregulated individualism. Then, in spite of the long national tradition and the reluctance of business interests, it belied all expectation by embarking on a thoroughly revolutionary policy of regulation and control.

Yet although democratic government and private industry have up till now stood in opposition, the one imposing and the other resisting regulation,

that is not the whole story. National industry, through the close association between its leaders and the members of the Government, has been able to make use of the State machinery for its own purposes. It has, for instance, invoked the aid of tariffs and other devices to secure for itself a predominance in the home market; it has used state diplomacy and military power to promote the operations of great international combines abroad and to build up a system of imperial trade. While, to the extent that it has been compelled, it has yielded up territories formerly sacred to private enterprise, it has also been able in a large measure to mould domestic and foreign policy in its own interests.

It seems that by the logic of its inner development the economic system has now come to the point at which this ambiguous position *vis-à-vis* the State is no longer tenable. Owing largely to technological advance and to the dislocation caused by the War, the problems of international trade and finance, and, in consequence, the difficulties of national industry in the great producing countries of the world have assumed such a character that they cannot be settled by the haphazard and unco-ordinated efforts of private corporations. Some kind of general planning is inevitable. The only question is what shall be the relative position of the State and of big business in any new form of economy. The State may choose to take to itself the sole management of industry or it may prefer to exercise general supervision over an



industrial federation to which it allows what it regards as the appropriate degree of autonomy. There can be no doubt that the big industrial interests have welcomed and assisted the formation of Fascist states in Italy and Germany as a means of forestalling the Communist alternative. We must not rule out of court similar developments in this country.

Whatever solution of the problem may be eventually adopted by the democratic states, it is clear that the old political arrangements will no longer suffice to meet the new demands made on them. In Great Britain the machinery by which industry is brought under control has been improvised from time to time to meet situations as they have arisen. New government departments have been created and the Civil Service has been increased as and when the need was felt. But in essence the Parliamentary system has remained unchanged since the eighteenth century, when England was still an agricultural country, and when the mass of detailed business which Government now undertakes was unthought of. We are struggling hard to make an obsolete machine perform tasks for which it was never intended.

The new political institutions in Russia, Italy, and Germany, however, are based on the frank acceptance of the need to resolve the conflict between Government and big business. The methods of achieving this end vary; the Russian and the Italian governments have indeed opposite views on the vital question of private property.

But the Bolsheviks and the Fascists agree in attempting to fuse political and economic institutions. (What exactly Hitler is aiming at is not at present very clear; but he is apparently moving in the direction of the Corporative State.) The Communist solution of complete State control of the economic machine is theoretically simple enough. The Fascist solution, which retains private enterprise and initiative but subjects them to direction by the State in the public interest, is not so simple theoretically and in practice must be worked out by the process of trial and error. The framework of the Corporative State, which now exists in Italy, is designed so that the economic organisations can be worked into the political system, economic function and political power being closely allied. Thus the Communists and the Fascists in their different ways have dealt squarely with the fundamental issue of modern politics, and they have devised an instrument of government in which this issue is settled. Whether either the Communist or the Fascist institutions will prove finally satisfactory in practice it is too early to say, but they have at all events the merit of being based on a straightforward policy. Moreover, they make it possible to co-ordinate industrial enterprise in accordance with a national scheme.

The authoritarian states have gained another advantage which the democracies must always envy. They have set up a form of government which is capable of rapid and decisive action. Those in control of policy can consult expert

opinion, come to a decision, and act at once, without going through the tiresome and dilatory process of persuading an ignorant public to demand measures which must in any case be taken if the situation is to be dealt with at all. The democratic tradition of the complete dependence of Government on slow-moving public opinion is so strong that the executive rarely has the courage to act up to the demands of even moderately progressive opinion. We cannot imagine any English Parliament of its own initiative doing such an obviously desirable thing as to put the manufacture and sale of arms under national control. Such an action would have to be preceded by years of elaborate preparation and coaxing of popular sentiment. The Government would want to receive a special mandate, and it might very well happen that no convenient place for this particular matter could be found in an election programme. Or consider the actual case of the treatment of Prohibition in America. It soon became obvious that the ban on the sale of alcohol could not be enforced, and that the whole machinery of law was being brought into contempt. Although the results of delay were bound to be disastrous in the extreme, for years no Government was willing to give the necessary lead and put an end to a state of affairs that was a disgrace to civilisation. In the rapidly changing conditions of national life, it is surely most important that rulers should be able to take the initiative and to be sometimes ahead of public opinion instead of always considerably behind it.

And if rapidity and decision are necessary qualities in national government, they are doubly necessary in the control of international affairs. Yet one of the most disquieting features of world politics is the crippling effect of elected assemblies on statesmanship. Foreign policy is paralysed by its inability to free itself from the dead-weight of mass-opinion created by misunderstanding, ignorance, and passion. No better illustration of the ineptitude of the democratic governments in international negotiation need be sought than that which appeared during the events leading up to the abortive World Economic Conference of 1933. We must go back to December, 1931, when the Special Advisory Committee of the Bank for International Settlements issued its report on the problems of Reparations and War Debts. The committee pointed out with all the seriousness at its command the extreme danger of the international situation, and urged that there should be no delay on the part of the Governments concerned in coming to some arrangement in the matter. In spite of this call to action nothing was done for six months. A conference to be held at Lausanne was proposed, but the matter was indefinitely postponed. Why? The democratically elected leaders in France and the United States were rendered powerless by the state of national opinion. The French ministers were fully aware of the dangers involved in postponing a settlement, but they were also fully aware that in the existing condition of French opinion any Government

which proposed to forgo German Reparation payments would not last a minute. In other words, the French ministers could not lead: they were led. Similarly, we must give President Hoover and his advisers credit for knowing that America must sooner or later meet Europe in the matter of War Debts. But nothing could be done without the consent of such groups as the farmers of the Middle West: that is to say, public policy was dictated by the blind wishes of millions of electors who knew and cared so little about the European situation that they could not even see how their own interests would ultimately be best served.

Meanwhile, another instance of the failure of democracy in international action was provided by the Conference of the four powers, Great Britain, France, Germany, and Italy which met in April, 1932, to devise means of saving the Danubian States from economic collapse. The conference was entirely without result, and the main reason was that the delegates met on the eve of elections in Germany and in France; consequently the representatives of those powers could do nothing until they knew which way the cat would jump.

At length, in the following June came the postponed Lausanne Conference. The result was an agreement which was conditional on American co-operation—which, in fact, was not forthcoming. The Lausanne deliberations, however, led to the decision to call a World Economic Conference to consider—what? At first the state of public opinion

in the various democracies prevented even a clear statement of the subjects to be discussed. However, it was realised that international discussion was necessary if the solution of the economic crisis was to be found. When should it take place? At once?—After all the business was rather urgent: 30,000,000 people throughout the world were unemployed. But there must be no unseemly haste. This time the American Presidential elections had to be considered. American electors had tender feelings about such things as War Debts and Tariffs, and the Presidential candidates had to be elaborately obscure on these fundamental issues until they had safely secured office. The elections were over in November. Surely the World Conference could now get to work on the somewhat pressing task of saving the existing economic system. By no means. Not so fast. Another defect of democratic machinery—this time peculiar to the American system—was encountered. The new President, though elected, would not take office until following March. Thus for four months the United States was governed by an administration that could do nothing but mark time in all matters of vital policy. When the World Conference finally met in London, wide divergencies in national policies prevented any fruitful result. But that is another story.

The glaring fact is that throughout this critical period in the history of our industrial civilisation international policy was determined by the blind ignorance and prejudice of the masses in direct

opposition to the best expert opinion. (It is no answer to say that experts have disagreed: on certain fundamental points there has been no disagreement.) The gap between expert advice and popular opinion was widest in the United States, owing no doubt to the remoteness of the bulk of the population from the European scene, and also to the fact that until the Wall Street collapse of 1929 the problem of the post-war depression was a merely academic one to the average American. Three years of unparalleled depression and hardship did little or nothing to bridge the gap. Towards the end of 1932 the Institute of Economics attached to the Brookings Institution of Washington published a study of *War Debts and Prosperity*. This Institute, it must be explained, was founded by the Carnegie Corporation, but is administered by an independent board of trustees with the declared purpose that "the Institute shall be conducted with the sole object of ascertaining the facts about the current economic problems and of interpreting these facts for the people of the United States in the most simple and understandable form". The conclusions to which the Institute was brought after a long study of the problem were that "a complete obliteration of all Reparation and War Debt obligations would promote, rather than retard, world economic prosperity", and that "the collection of these inter-governmental debts would be economically detrimental, rather than beneficial, to the creditor countries."

Yet, the Government of the United States remained deaf to the findings of both American and European economists: its policy was still completely adverse to either revision or cancellation of War Debt payments. The simple explanation of its attitude was given in a letter from Dr. L. P. Jacks, which appeared most appositely on the same page of *The Times*<sup>1</sup> as the leading article which discussed the report of the Brookings Institution. Speaking from his own observation while in America, he pointed out that although instructed opinion was predominantly in favour of revision, and frequently of cancellation, there was a mass of uninstructed opinion, enormous in volume, quite otherwise minded. To that type of mind the debts owed by foreign nations presented themselves simply as so much potential wealth possessed by America, a huge addition to her resources, the relinquishment of which would be an intolerable sacrifice. Thus the lamentable fact we have to face is that, in the conflict between expert opinion and mass ignorance, in democracies it is mass ignorance that wins. It is true, of course, that the ideas of the intelligent minority eventually permeate mass opinion; but the time-lag is so great that too often events outrun political control.

§ 6 *Are the Virtues of the Dictatorships wholly  
incompatible with Liberty?*

Our examination of the working of the non-democratic states has revealed a number of features

<sup>1</sup> 29th November, 1932.



which, considered in themselves apart from their accompaniments, are worthy of admiration. We observe strong enthusiasm for political ideals, and courageous leadership supported by a new sense of duty and discipline among the nation at large. We see political institutions specially devised to cope with the economic developments of modern times and to provide speedy and decisive governmental action. I have suggested that there are lessons here which the democracies must not refuse to learn: the authoritarian states have embodied certain principles which must enter into any political system that is to survive in present day conditions.

But I have deliberately slurred over the elements of repression, intolerance, and cruelty which are equally important in the new systems. And here, of course, we are brought to the crux of the whole matter. It will be urged that the attractive features of the new states are inseparably associated with the suppression of liberty, and that therefore the price that must be paid for them is too high: it would be better that we should rub along with our comparatively slow and inefficient Parliamentary institutions based on a flaccid public opinion than that we should become a nation of regimented fanatics with no more initiative than is needed to shoot out the right arm at the appropriate moment. This indeed is the present attitude of the only political parties in this country that are likely to be charged with the duty of government in the near future. With revolution looming on the

horizon, they pursue a policy of masterly inactivity so far as the major issues are concerned. And the practical men find support from the feeble theorists who argue: "Of course, our present political institutions are not all they should be: no institutions ever are. But, after all, they are the best that can be devised; they have stood the test of time. What other country can show such stability as ours in times of crisis? We must wait for the result of education. In the long run, self-government is better than good government"—and so on.

But events will be too strong for the laggards. The situation in this country, though not so catastrophic at present as in some others, is critical, and drastic changes in government and economic organisation will be forced on us. In our case the domestic problem is intimately bound up with world situation as a whole, and is thus the more difficult of solution. Of course, things have a habit of righting themselves. Through the operation of obscure causes the general economic position may improve and a period of renewed confidence may set in; in Great Britain an expansion of trade has indeed taken place, and at the time of writing is still in progress. In the nations that are now threatening the peace of the world something unforeseen may happen to dispel the war-clouds now hanging over Europe. But such an unforeseen and unwilling improvement may be the most dangerous thing that could happen, for it may lead us to acquiesce in the existing chaotic machinery of government, and to find comfort once more

in the belief that after all we have muddled through again and no doubt we shall always be able to do so. Nobody with an ounce of perspicacity, however, can fail to see that, if by good fortune we weather the storm now, we shall before long run into other storms of such violence that they will sooner or later wreck the ship, unless we have taken precautions to strengthen the vessel and improve the efficiency of the officers and crew.

The question, therefore, is not whether radical transformation of our political and social life must be undertaken, but whether the transformation, when made, shall end in dictatorship or in such a modification of free institutions as will preserve the essentials of liberty. For let there be no mistake. The comfortably vague and hesitant policy that does little more than let things take their course is making people despair of politics. Young people, in particular, are becoming more and more impatient of continued failure to grapple with the central problems. The cynicism which is all too common among them is very much more than a transitory post-war manifestation. To the generation now growing up the reactionary Toryism and the comfortable Liberalism of the last century are merely historical phenomena, and the present heirs of those traditions have little to say to them. Young people of to-day have never known a world that was not in a mess; they have witnessed revolutions followed by the establishment of dictatorships; they see the dictators apparently getting things

done and standing no nonsense, while democratic governments live from hand to mouth with neither vigour nor plan; they realise that our economic system needs complete overhauling, and yet only the extremists have anything that can be called a programme of re-organisation. No wonder they feel that the "constitutional" political parties are played out and are merely pretending to deal with a situation that is really beyond their control. No wonder the sons and daughters of landed gentry, of wealthy business men, of country rectors, go up to the Universities and seriously discuss—not the respectable and innocuous Fabian Socialism that pre-war undergraduates knew—but a full-blooded revolutionary Communism in which presumably they and their class will submit to the will of the sovereign proletariat. No wonder the sons and daughters of working-class families, living in constant material want and spiritual hopelessness, are prepared to support a Fascist *coup d'état*, even though it should strengthen the hands of industrial magnates whose blindly competitive activities are responsible for the present situation, and though it should bring the workers into a more rigid enslavement than they have ever known. Such paradoxical situations arise because the idealists and the real sufferers from the present chaos know that for millions of people in so-called free countries to-day, liberty has no genuine significance, and they are therefore prepared to risk considerable curtailment of political liberty provided that more tolerable conditions of material

life can be secured. The threat of despotism is by no means the bugbear it once was.

If, then, we are prepared for a thorough overhaul of our political and economic system we should do well to learn what we can from the States which have discarded our methods. We should not be too hasty in dismissing their principles as being totally unsuited to a free country. It may be possible to reconcile the good in them with the essentials of liberty. Such a reconciliation would no doubt involve a profound alteration in the shape of democracy. But this would not be a matter of serious regret to any but crass individualists born out of due season. The anxiety for most of us is whether the re-shaping can be done in time.

## CHAPTER IV

### MAKING THE BEST OF DEMOCRACY

#### § I *The Need for a New Programme of Reform*

THE analysis of the present situation in the democracies surely makes it clear that the only defence of freedom is attack. Those who believe in liberty must combine to promote a positive programme designed to appeal to the large body of progressively-minded people who are ready for change but unwilling to pursue the primrose path leading through violence to a doubtful Utopia. Ideally, we need a new Reform Party, freed from the trammels of outworn nineteenth-century doctrines, but holding to the essentials of the liberal tradition, and seeking to apply scientific treatment to the problems of society. Firmly repudiating brute force and unscrupulous propaganda as methods of political action, such a party would stand for democracy in so far as the democratic State embodies political freedom, though it would be prepared for ruthless scrapping of those parts of the democratic machinery that fail to function. If, indeed, it was to appeal to the younger generation, it would certainly have to preach democracy "with a difference".

As a matter of practical politics the creation of a new party is, I suppose, neither desirable nor

feasible. If the existing groups of moderate opinion distinguished by their professions of loyalty to free institutions really meant business, it would be unnecessary. They would be prepared to sink party differences and agree upon a broad policy of revision that could be rapidly carried through and would give Parliamentary government a chance to work with maximum efficiency, to deal systematically with the economic problem, and so to remove some, at any rate, of the present grounds for reproach. Such a coalition of the Centre, determined on action, would not be content with the reform of political mechanism. It would face the longer and much more difficult task of improving the character and training of the personnel of Government. It would foster interest in politics among those who have most to bring to the service of the community, and it would seek to provide new opportunities of public service for all who are willing to accept them. Through a wide educational effort it would strive to convert "politician" from a term of reproach into a name having the dignity that properly belongs to it in a free community.

With regard to the organs of representative government, there is already very general agreement that radical changes are necessary; therefore sane proposals with responsible backing should not encounter irresistible opposition. Such proposals ought, in fact, to secure the immediate and active support of all the progressive parties, for these groups must obviously desire the maximum efficiency

in the instrument of government, whatever their ultimate aims may be.

It would have been much easier to put forward such a programme a few years ago than it is to-day. Through the delay of the constitutional parties and the apparently complete failure of the House of Commons to realise the urgency of its own re-organisation, the situation has become difficult and confused. The reform of Parliamentary government is now associated in the public mind with Sir Oswald Mosley on the one hand and Sir Stafford Cripps on the other; and reform is taken to mean supersession. Both men are making these proposals at once a part of, and a means to secure, a revolutionary programme, and both can be represented as aiming at a dictatorship—temporary or permanent. What, in fact, would be the attitude of these revolutionaries towards the liberty of the subject if they gained power is not the immediate question. The matter for concern at the moment is that any radical reform of our methods of government can now be colourably described as a covert approach to dictatorship, and therefore many people will be so frightened as to be unwilling to do anything, even although the policy of negation is the one most likely to produce the very situation they fear.

But though delay has made reform more difficult, it has not made it impossible. It will be necessary, however, to make it abundantly clear that the new measures are intended not to pave the way for despotism but to buttress the citadel of liberty



and to forestall the demagogues waiting to usurp power. It will also be necessary for these new measures to be sufficiently decisive and far-reaching to rival in popular appeal the existing schemes of the Right and the Left. The programme for Parliamentary reform may even incorporate some of the proposals of Sir Oswald Mosley and Sir Stafford Cripps; the objection that many have to these proposals at present is not that they are bad in themselves but that they are to be introduced as a means to an economic policy of doubtful soundness.

Revolutionary rapidity is at present more possible and desirable in political than in economic reconstruction. The ills of our political system are plain and some of the remedies at least are not hard to find, but those who prefer scientific analysis to partisan dogma about private and public ownership, are not so sure that we yet know the right way out of our economic difficulties. In this country, at any rate, the sound policy would seem to be to avoid as long as possible a catastrophic interference with the delicate system of world trade in which we are involved and to assist the present tendencies towards sounder organisation within the capitalist body. But such a policy can be carried out successfully only under the stimulus and guidance of a central governmental authority, and it thus becomes the more necessary that the political house should first be put in order. Moreover, even if a revolutionary economic plan were eventually found desirable, it would need for its successful initiation and operation a much more

efficient political organ than now exists. Thus there is both tactical and strategic wisdom in concentrating first of all on the reform of Parliamentary institutions. Actually, of course, this will involve the re-organisation and improvement of the regulative machinery of government as applied to trade and industry. But that is not the same thing as the sudden introduction of a system whose effects no one can clearly foresee.

§ 2 *The Democratic Myth concerning the Common Man*

The urgent and immediately practicable task, then, is to transform democratic government with the minimum interference with individual liberty. As a preliminary we must give straight answers to a number of questions usually befogged by prejudice and muddled thinking. How many of the outward forms of popular government are worth preserving? Is universal franchise, for instance, a blessing or a curse? To what extent is the traditional routine and ritual of the House of Commons a true safeguard of liberty, and to what extent does it merely obstruct business? Can democracy free itself from the admitted evils of the party system? In an age when the organs of propaganda have attained unprecedented power, what checks on individual freedom formerly unnecessary have now become imperative? What attitude should a modern democratic government adopt towards the freedom of the Press? Such questions cannot be left where they were half a century ago.

Underlying our whole problem there is a crucial issue which is all too frequently shirked. This is to be found in the democratic myth concerning the common man. I would urge that no real progress is possible until we abandon the conventional notion about the potentialities of the average human being. I must not labour here the argument which I have set out fully elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> but I am sure no harm will be done if I repeat the main point, for the fallacy I am attacking dies very hard and is still conspicuous in most of the public pronouncements of orthodox democrats.

When leader-writers in *The Times* and publicists of conventional liberal views discourse on the prospects of representative government, they inevitably come to the impressive conclusion that the True Defence of Democracy is a Politically Educated Electorate. There is no quarrelling with the logic of such a doctrine if the usual democratic premise is accepted. But what relation does it bear to fact? Most of the people who look to the spread of education to preserve democracy, and hence freedom, are hoping for something which is quite impossible. They assume that the common man is either capable of taking a useful part in political affairs or can be made so by suitable training. This is simply not true. Not only those who have made a scientific study of human capacity, but all who take the trouble to observe their fellow-creatures without prejudice know perfectly well that the bulk of mankind have neither the intelligence nor

<sup>1</sup> In *A Realist Looks at Democracy*.

the interest in public affairs to enable them to make any real contribution to political life. Interest can be stimulated and native intelligence can be brought into full play by suitable methods, but there is no known process by which individual intelligence can be increased; and unless the average of intelligence can be considerably raised, and the sense of social responsibility can be developed far more widely than we have any reason to suppose possible, there is no hope that the collective decisions of democracy will ever show much greater wisdom than they do at present.

The extraordinary faith of the older living publicists in the power of education is, I think, partly explained by the fact that they have never rid their thinking of the influence of their own youthful experiences. They cannot forget the badness of the teaching and the narrowness of the curriculum at their public school or private academy forty odd years ago, or they bitterly resent the lack of opportunity for the elementary school child before the Education Act of 1902. They do not allow themselves to realise that far-reaching changes have taken place since their school days. Teaching methods have enormously improved and the proportion of children receiving education to the age of sixteen and later has greatly increased. In fact, a generation has grown up which has had all the advantages of very widely extended educational opportunity. But I do not know that this generation appears to its seniors to have made a very notable advance in wisdom, political or other.

This matter is of such fundamental importance that I cannot refrain from quoting one or two of the pronouncements which otherwise competent analysts of political affairs continue to make on education as a solvent of the difficulties of democracy. Sir Norman Angell, as Halley Stewart Lecturer (1932-3), discussed the conflict between the judgments of the economists and the ignorant prejudices of the masses. In the course of his first lecture he said:—

“An educated man certainly ought to be able to understand why the vast sums involved in debts or reparations can only be paid in goods or services; but we know as a matter of fact that vast numbers of educated people don't understand it, and unless our democracies are to go smash, education must somehow make that kind of problem something which the millions can grasp. To do that it must make the millions more conscious of the kind of intellectual folly into which we are all apt to fall, more aware, that is, of the dangers of our own nature; and must develop the particular skills which enable us to see the meaning of everyday experience and apply it to our social problem.”<sup>1</sup>

These remarks are typical in their pathetic trust in the capacity of the average man. To make the thousands grasp the matters to which Sir Norman refers is both possible and desirable. But to demand that the millions should understand these things in any effective kind of way is to shut one's eyes to the facts of human nature.

<sup>1</sup> Reported in *Public Opinion*, 20th January, 1933.

The more realistic supporters of democracy, however, have begun to put their case in more plausible terms than formerly. They admit that the ordinary elector cannot be expected to decide on the details of such technical matters as tariff policy, currency management, or international relations; but they assert that he can be trained to become an effective influence on public opinion concerning "the broad issues of policy". Even this argument seems to me to be largely delusive, for the so-called broad questions on which electors are called upon to pronounce judgment are not so simple and amenable to straightforward treatment as is implied; moreover, they are rarely, if ever, presented as abstract issues; they demand answers in terms of practical methods. Thus, we know from experience that the ordinary man (when sufficiently stimulated by determined reformers) can be made to support schemes for improved housing. But in making this general demand for an obviously necessary social reform he does not advance very far along the road to competent citizenship. We might attach more value to his co-operation if we could trust him to decide such other "broad questions" as whether the new houses should be erected by private builders or by public authorities. Again, it would be easy, no doubt (so long as militarist and nationalist propaganda was kept within bounds), to create a public opinion in favour of world peace. But would it be easy to educate the ordinary elector to choose between the possible methods of securing

peace? What in actual fact he is likely to be asked to decide is whether we should increase or decrease our armaments, or whether we should strive to build up a strong self-contained empire, or what attitude we should adopt towards commitments in Europe; and an intelligent "yes" or "no" to such questions implies no small knowledge and perspicacity. To take one further example,—the unemployment problem. This must be a "broad issue" in any election programme to-day. In what way is it suggested that the electorate can be trained to give helpful decisions on this matter? Without any special political training, citizens may be trusted to demand the provision of work. But as soon as we go beyond this general demand, we enter the controversial realm of ways and means. One party would provide employment by socialising industry, another by currency reform, a third by returning to *laissez-faire*, a fourth by establishing the Corporative State. In practice, "the broad question" is not whether employment should be provided, but how it should be provided; and here, in spite of all that educators may do, I do not think that the opinion of the majority of electors will be worth much.

The latest plea for the common man and his contribution to government has been made by Mr. J. A. Hobson.<sup>1</sup> He is well aware of all the hard things that have been said about the popular mind, and he will not go so far as to rely on the average man's active and intelligent participation

<sup>1</sup> *Democracy* (The Bodley Head), 1934.

in discussion and policy. He asserts, however, that there is in the people a "common sense", which should give the sanction to the authority of rulers. "This common sense is a real and potent force in the community, not a fully conscious art of government, but a half-instinctive, half-rational drive towards the common good. Primarily it acts as a conservative force, preventive of rash action such as will endanger the Commonwealth. But in a changing world security demands readjustments, sometimes rapid, to the new environments, and common sense plays an active part in such readjustment. It does not devise the acts of policy by which government operates. That belongs to the technique of statecraft. But its function is something more than a vacant consent. It is often a positive demand for a creative action which it is the business of a truly representative Government and its statesmen to interpret and express in terms of policy."

But this common sense which Mr. Hobson postulates as the driving force of free institutions soon involves him in difficulties. "Common sense," he says later, "does not mean that sense which is found in all men. A great many men are not guided by this sense; either they do not possess it, or they allow it to be over-ridden by some dominant passion or interest. There is found everywhere a large stratum of humanity whose crude inert mentality keeps them normally below the level of active common sense. Slaves of custom and convention, they are only roused to activity by



some panic appeal to fear or hate. As human beings they must perhaps be accredited with possessing some rudiment of common sense, and political education may well address itself to strengthening this rudiment. But democracy does not imply that all men are equal in their capacity for contributing to popular self-government. In every electorate there is a considerable percentage of voters who do not even take the trouble to vote. This does not in the least invalidate the electoral system: it merely indicates that all men are not political animals." This is all very confusing. If the common sense on which we are to rely turns out to be not common at all, what does it avail us? How do we know that in any particular crisis the voice of those who possess this faculty may not be drowned by the clamour of those who lack it, and who have for once been whipped out of their inertia by some extraordinary appeal?

Mr. Hobson himself realises that common sense—however distributed—is not as effective a motive-power as might be desired in these troublous times. Now that the element of planning has been introduced into economic and other fields of government, we need "a more thoughtful mind in the electorate", "a public opinion more intelligent, more stable in purpose, than actually exists". He now admits: "The sort of common sense which I have hitherto adduced as a warrant for democracy is not enough. Though sound for certain simple issues and emergencies, it has not, in its uneducated form sufficient initiative and constructive power to

make the popular will an effective instrument for government." And so we are brought once more to the necessity for education. But Mr. Hobson is under no illusions about what education can do; he is therefore forced to change his ground and ruin what little consistency his argument possessed.—"It would be foolish to deceive ourselves into believing that educational opportunities alone can impart a high general standard of culture or intelligence, reflected in a keen, continuous interest in politics. Judging from the classes which have had full access to such intellectual opportunities, we may reasonably infer that only a minority of any class will cultivate this keen interest in public affairs. What is required is such free access to intellectual opportunities as shall produce in every social environment a sufficient minority of this type of mind. A chief function of these intelligent minorities will be to prevent the minds of the uninformed and less intelligent minority from succumbing to the deceptive propaganda which artful politicians employ to gain their ends." Mr. Hobson is thus driven in the long run to put his trust in the intelligence of the few rather than the common sense of the many. And I invite him to explain just how the intelligent minority are to prevent the majority from falling a prey to artful propaganda when, *ex hypothesi*, (1) the majority have little intelligence, (2) the propaganda has all the attractiveness which plain truth lacks. Of course, it cannot be done. Mr. Hobson sees the danger of propaganda, but he will not look at the

matter squarely and admit that in these days when the masses are constantly subjected to propaganda of unprecedented volume and power, the case for the common man as a participant in majority rule is completely destroyed.

In exaggerating the common man's political capacity,<sup>1</sup> conventional democratic doctrine also overestimates the value he puts on the freedom which is traditionally regarded as his right. National slogans such as "Britons never shall be slaves", and "Liberty, equality, and fraternity", conjure up pictures of millions of politically-conscious citizens, banded together in sturdy independence to assert their native rights and to resist both foreign foe and domestic tyrant. But such ideas have little correspondence with reality. What actually happens in any struggle against tyranny is that a few leading spirits, having decided that certain conditions would be intolerable to them, persuade the rest of their class, or perhaps the masses of their fellow-citizens, to support them in resistance. The slight value which the majority put upon freedom as such is indicated by the ease with which the dictators have persuaded their followers to abandon that freedom on the promise of attractive alternative benefits.

Liberty is the absence of restraint. There can be no question of restraint unless there is potential

<sup>1</sup> There are those who will object that "the common man", to whom I so frequently refer, does not exist any more than does "the economic man." The objection is, of course, valid, but pedantic. The term is a convenient label for an abstraction which anyone can translate into concrete form by reference to the people he meets in the course of a day.

action. Liberty of thought and expression means a great deal to me if I am a professional author, a political publicist, a teacher, or a research-worker; but it means very little if I never write anything except an occasional illiterate letter and my highest flight in literature does not reach beyond the serial in *Peg's Paper*. The question of the censorship will worry me badly if I want to give to the world *The Doctor's Dilemma*, or *The Well of Loneliness*, or *Ulysses*; it will affect me also if I desire to read such works when written by others; but if books transgressing the conventions never come within my purview, the vagaries of the censor or the police authorities give me no concern. I shall cherish the right of association if I am a keen trade unionist; but I am likely to be quite indifferent to it so long as my only affiliation is with the local bowling-club. If I am anxious to become a Parliamentary candidate, I shall very much resent any barriers of class or wealth that prevent me from doing so; but in the absence of such ambitions I shall probably not be seriously disturbed by party wire-pulling and the manœuvres of the privileged classes. Compulsory military service will affect me in one way if I am a young pacifist intellectual and in a very different way if I am an unimaginative youth who has never considered the significance of war: in the one case I shall be roused to passionate and active opposition; in the other I shall probably do nothing but indulge in a little mild grumbling.

The majority of people have no desire to take

part in political or religious controversy or to express any opinions likely to provoke official action. For them the question of freedom in most of its aspects has little significance. Their most important interests in life are concerned with getting a living and amusing themselves in their leisure time. They like to be able to sell their goods or their labour just as they please, and they do not want to be interfered with in their play. They become mildly aggrieved if they are forced to close their shops at particular hours, and they sometimes protest when they cannot play games on Sunday, or drive noisy vehicles at unlimited speed, or buy champagne at three in the morning. But it is absurd to suppose that they cling passionately to a principle. They would cheerfully put up with much greater restrictions if they were guaranteed an improved, and above all a secure, economic position. Even economic freedom is of much less consequence to them than economic prosperity.

### § 3 *Facing the Facts*

My object in these remarks is not to demonstrate that representative institutions based on liberty are futile and unworkable. I am pleading that we should rid ourselves of sentimental humbug and frankly recognise that in regard to liberty, as also in regard to the political aspect of education, our primary concern must be for those individuals possessing genuinely active and creative character. When we extol the virtues of a free human society, we do not mean that a community will suffer

irreparable loss if restrictions are imposed on the unintelligent, the unimaginative, and the inarticulate majority; what we do mean is that there can be no health in a community if those members of it who have vision, energy, and creative power in any direction are denied opportunities of expression and action. We concede to every human being, however humble, the right, in virtue of his humanity, to live his own life as far as may be in his own way, and we may think that the citizen body is of higher quality when its members are given individual responsibility than when they are dragooned; but what we are really anxious about is that men and women of special intellectual and moral force shall be able to make their full contribution to social progress.

In waiting for everyone to be raised to the level of competent citizenship in a free community, we are wasting time; and in seeking such an end we are dissipating energy that could be more profitably employed in other directions. A great and hitherto neglected educational opportunity is open to us in connection with the minority who are genuinely capable of receiving training for citizenship. The successful performance of even this more limited task will call for all our effort. Here, however, energy will be well spent, for we shall be preparing the more intelligent and vigorous individuals for the work of social and political reconstruction which they in any case will have to undertake.

To the purely educational aspect of our problem I return in Chapter V. I have referred to it here

only because a right attitude towards it is a necessary preliminary to the discussion of the reform of political institutions which is my theme in the present chapter. I now resume consideration of practical measures for improving democratic machinery.

#### § 4 *Parliamentary Reform*

Much of what I have said in the preceding pages runs counter to accepted democratic views. I believe, in fact, that we are trying to work the representative system on quite wrong lines. I do not, however, advocate the abolition of that system. In the first place, in common with all who desire liberty, I dislike the only possible alternatives; and in the second place, it is not the part of practical wisdom to scrap existing institutions until it has been proved conclusively that they are incapable of being re-modelled in accordance with contemporary needs. It is easy for the theorist or the dictator in a hurry to draw up a paper constitution beautiful in symmetry and in aspiration; but such a system is likely to be either completely unworkable or practicable only after repeated compromise with the facts of national life. So long as we can avoid the hasty improvisations born of catastrophe, therefore, the right course is to adapt existing institutions, paying proper regard to changed political conceptions.

Of the need for the reform of Parliamentary government there seems to be agreement everywhere except in Parliament itself. Nor is there

any lack of suggestions which are both practical and authoritative. Moreover, as the following brief survey will show, these suggestions come not from any one party but from statesmen and students of most shades of opinion. A satisfactory scheme of reform could be devised without much difficulty by a suitable body of experienced men determined not to let tradition and vested interests obstruct their purpose. The difficulty at present is to get any such scheme seriously considered by the only body capable of dealing with it, namely, the House of Commons. Occasionally, it is true, Parliament submits to a perfunctory self-examination. The Committee on the Machinery of Government, presided over by Lord Haldane, duly issued a report in 1918 when the country was in the throes of schemes of "Reconstruction"; and more recently (in 1932) the Select Committee on House of Commons Procedure published its not very stimulating recommendations. But the practical results of these inquiries have been negligible. The acting Government at any given time is always either afraid or too busy to tackle the problem of its own reorganisation. The National Government of 1931, with its huge majority and its "doctor's mandate", had an exceptional opportunity, but it neglected to take it. Failing definite proposals initiated by a party in office, the right method of procedure would be the holding of an all-party conference in which—if it is conceivable—party tactics might be forgotten, and attention concentrated on the paramount need to infuse new life into moribund



institutions. Unfortunately, the present signs are that the matter will merely provoke a party squabble. Proposals for Parliamentary reform—of a fairly mild character—appear in the official Labour Party programme (1934) for the next election. If they become a live issue they will, of course, be opposed by the other parties, irrespective of their merits. This inability of Parliamentarians to distinguish between what is a legitimate party matter and what is a question demanding an agreed solution on rational lines is one of the factors contributing to the widespread distrust of political methods.

### § 5 *The Cabinet*

In gathering together the principal suggestions for the revision of Parliamentary government in this country we may usefully begin with the Cabinet. In modern times the initiative in legislation and the executive power have fallen almost entirely into the hands of the small group of statesmen forming the Cabinet. Owing to the fact that it has come to be regarded as the Prime Minister's right to claim a dissolution whenever the House of Commons disagrees with him, this body has acquired almost dictatorial power: members of the House will naturally think twice before they create a situation which will certainly involve them in heavy election expenses and may lose them their seat. The tight hold which the Prime Minister and the Cabinet have over the rank and file is a matter deserving consideration. It narrowly circumscribes the ordinary member's influence and usefulness, and

tends to reduce him to a vote-recording automaton. On the other hand, it may be said that the English system is preferable to the French, in which the Prime Minister's lack of power leads to anarchy; and that without such autocratic power in the hands of the executive, the strong leadership exploited to the full by the dictatorships will always be outside the reach of democracies. There is, however, much to be said for limiting the claim to a dissolution to occasions when the Government is defeated on a major issue.

But what is far more important than this is that the Cabinet should function much more efficiently than it does at present. If it is to be allowed despotic authority, it must at least be fit to work out and direct general policy and to co-ordinate the activities of the various departments. It is notorious that no cabinet as at present constituted is capable of doing this. The supreme council of ministers has never been properly organised for the business-like conduct of its affairs. It required a World War to secure even the appointment of a regular secretary: before 1916 no minutes of Cabinet meetings were taken, and thus ministers might come away from discussions with no clear idea about what decisions, if any, had been reached. The Haldane Committee, appointed to consider the broad question of Cabinet organisation, made precise recommendations regarding the size of the Cabinet, the formation of a special organ of intelligence and research, and the redistribution of functions between the ministerial departments. But these recommendations have

been ignored. Present methods have been described in pungent terms by Mr. L. S. Amery, M.P.:—

“We attempt to direct the affairs of a great nation by weekly meetings between departmental chiefs all absorbed in the routine of their departments, all concerned to secure Cabinet sanction for this or that departmental proposal, all giving a purely temporary and more or less perfunctory attention to the issues brought up by other departments. Every Cabinet meeting is a scramble to get through an agenda in which the competition of departments for a place is varied by the incursion of urgent telegrams from abroad or of sudden questions in the House of Commons for which some sort of policy or answer must be improvised.

“The one thing that is hardly ever discussed is general policy. Nothing indeed is more calculated to make a Cabinet Minister unpopular with his colleagues than a tiresome insistence on discussing general issues of policy, often controversial, when there are so many urgent matters of detail always waiting to be decided. The result is that there is very little Cabinet policy, as such, on any subject. No one has time to think it out, to discuss it, to co-ordinate its various elements, or to see to its prompt and consistent enforcement. There are only departmental policies.”<sup>1</sup>

Speaking from his own experience as a member of the Cabinet and as one of the secretaries of Mr. Lloyd George's War Cabinet, Mr. Amery gives it as his view that the right solution is to have a

<sup>1</sup> *Observer*, 8th April, 1934.

Cabinet of not more than six,<sup>1</sup> no one of whom should have any departmental duties. Individual members might specialise in particular aspects of policy, but "what is essential is that they should all, without exception, be free of departmental work and should all contribute effectively to the formation of a common Cabinet policy, to its execution and to its exposition in Parliament and in the country."

More detailed suggestions for improving Cabinet machinery for formulating policy have been made by Lord Cecil of Chelwood.<sup>2</sup> He is in favour of a system of standing committees of the Cabinet to deal with special areas of administrative work. For determining the most important questions of general policy there should be a General Purposes Committee, of which the regular members would be the Prime Minister and the Chairmen of the other Standing Committees, and to which might be summoned the Foreign Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and such other ministers as might be required. This Committee would be like the War Cabinet in its smallness, but it would be different in two respects: the large numbers of experts and officials who attended the War Cabinet would not attend this Committee; further, this special body would not supersede the Cabinet as a whole.

Lord Cecil also emphasises the imperative need to relieve the strain on the Prime Minister and the

<sup>1</sup> The Haldane Committee recommended "ten, or, at most, twelve".

<sup>2</sup> Sidney Ball Lecture, 1932, on "The Machinery of Government".

leading members of the Cabinet. The enormous amount of work and responsibility which now devolves on the Prime Minister is greater than any human being can carry. Not only does his physical health suffer—most of the Prime Ministers of recent times have had periods of breakdown—but too often he loses the faculty of decision: action gives place to postponement, evasion, or the appointment of a Royal Commission. Lord Cecil suggests ways in which the Prime Minister might conserve his energy. He might be spared constant attendance at the House of Commons, and party leadership and the making of party-speeches might be left to one of his less hard-worked colleagues. He might also ruthlessly cut down the time which it is now customary for him to devote to social and semi-public dinners and to speeches to learned societies.

The burden of the Foreign Secretary is almost equally in need of lightening in these days. In addition to keeping abreast of all the major developments abroad and travelling here and there to meet representatives of foreign powers, he is now expected to attend all the important meetings of the League of Nations. He, too, is so immersed in detail and spurred by the need for decisions on immediate questions that he has no time to think out sound general policy on international affairs. Lord Cecil's proposal is that there should be an Assistant Foreign Secretary whose duties should include all League of Nations business.

### § 6 *The House of Commons*

We come next to the House of Commons itself. This unwieldy assembly of over 600 members is at present trying to do work for which such a body is quite unfitted, and is trying to do it by methods which would be accounted unsatisfactory by any test of efficiency. It is vastly overloaded with business, yet it clings to antiquated procedure and obsolete ritual and allows systematic obstruction as a regular manœuvre in the party game. Criticism of Parliamentary methods is now so commonplace that we may well spare detail here. Everybody interested in these matters knows, for instance, how futile debate proceeds, by a succession of wearisome and repetitive speeches, to a division of which the result is a foregone conclusion; how important and controversial bills are taken clause by clause in a Committee of the Whole House and a way has to be driven laboriously through hundreds of amendments; how time is wasted in discussing private members' bills which, it is obvious, can never reach the Statute-book; how members are made to line up time after time for divisions, each taking a quarter of an hour, for the sole purpose of providing a record of their attendance; and how two or three recalcitrant members can block a measure and defeat the considered judgment of the House.

These faults in procedure could, of course, be very quickly put right by any House of Commons that was ready to take itself in hand and pursue

the aim of general efficiency instead of party advantage. At least, to the ordinary onlooker there would seem to be no difficulty. The Select Committee on Procedure (1932), however, discovered an unexpected obstacle. It appears that there is a crucial divergence of opinion among expert witnesses as to what the function of the House of Commons really is. There are some who consider that the House is primarily a national forum where great issues should be debated, and others who think its function to be that of a legislative machine, or a body charged with the control of expenditure and of departmental action. The mere voter may wonder why in a country having a free Press we should need a specially elected body mainly for the purpose of debate; and he may also observe that, whatever theorists may say, the House of Commons has in fact become a legislative machine, and that, if this House does not control expenditure and departmental action, nobody else is likely to do so. However, the Select Committee were apparently so struck by this divergence of view that they could make no important recommendations.

In the meantime the Labour Party has put forward a plan of reform<sup>1</sup> which is worth more than partisan support. There are two main proposals. The first deals with the allocation of Parliamentary time. It suggests that a committee of members of the House should be chosen at the beginning of each session in proportion to the strength of the parties, and that this committee should make

<sup>1</sup> Summarised in *Socialism and Peace*, 1934.

a detailed time-table for every Government Bill which had been read a first time. It would allot the maximum time to be spent on every stage of the bill, and would make recommendations to the House accordingly. The second proposal is that greater use should be made of delegated legislation; that is to say, in dealing with a big and complicated matter, Parliament should pass a short and simple Statute, and leave detail to be embodied in Ministerial Orders. This suggestion is conveniently mentioned here although it anticipates a subject which I reserve for later discussion.

Apologists for the present methods of procedure in the House of Commons bring forward an argument which should be disposed of: they give statistics of the number of measures passed in a given session and then suggest that anyone who wants more must be very difficult to satisfy. In spite of the imposing list of enactments to which any administration can point, it remains a fact that Government bills are often crowded out, and Government Departments always have a number of legislative proposals waiting for Parliamentary consideration, which through lack of time they do not receive. There are also existing laws which badly need revision, but which remain to cause confusion and injustice until public outcry at last forces them within the purview of a party programme.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since the present chapter was written Dr. W. Ivor Jennings has published in *Parliamentary Reform* (1934) his proposals for the revision of House of Commons procedure. This careful and judicial programme deserves full and immediate consideration. Dr. Jennings does not put forward a party



Besides matters of procedure, however, there are other problems which, while equally urgent, are not so ripe for solution, problems of a constitutional character on which the Select Committee's Report was silent because they were outside the terms of reference. It is, in the first place, of primary importance to devise the best method of enabling Parliament to give effective direction to economic policy. To-day, questions of industry, trade, and finance occupy a large proportion of the time of the House and are largely responsible for the extreme congestion of business. For good or ill, the State is committed to a policy which involves interference, regulation, and detailed administration in all parts of the industrial field. A constant stream of legislation profoundly affecting the economic structure is poured forth. Most of this is opportunist and piece-meal in character because the House of Commons as now constituted is incapable of formulating and controlling any coherent policy. If our governors are in a particularly business-like mood the best they can do is to refer a technical matter to a special expert committee, and ignore its report. In times of gravest crisis, such as that through which we are now passing, we have to trust for salvation to the unco-ordinated efforts of half-a-dozen different Government departments, the haphazard electioneering schemes of an over-worked Cabinet, and the random and

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document: he is "concerned solely as a technician to discover the means by which the House of Commons can be brought to work more efficiently".

obstructionist debate of an assembly most of whose members have no special competence in the matter.

It is essential that Parliament should free itself from the mass of detailed technical work it now attempts to do and should delegate it to a smaller and specially experienced body. The case for reform can perhaps be made most impressive by surveying the various schemes recently proposed by men who are actually engaged in Parliamentary or international affairs, and who cannot be accused of revolutionary inclinations.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Winston Churchill for instance, has for some time been urging the creation of an Economic Sub-Parliament composed of persons of high technical and business qualifications, trade union leaders, and others, who would give advice and guidance on economic policy in a non-party spirit. He suggests that the political Parliament should choose in proportion to its party groupings an Economic Parliament of say one-fifth of its numbers, and he imagines this assembly as debating quite freely, "without caring a half-penny who won the General Election."<sup>2</sup> He does not explain, however, what would happen to this body after a General Election had changed the complexion of the House of Commons.

<sup>1</sup> For this reason I omit discussion of such works as Mr. and Mrs. Webb's *Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain* (1920). It may be said in passing that this plan for the division of Parliament into two co-ordinate national assemblies, one dealing with political and the other with social and economic affairs, has generally been regarded as impracticable on the ground that the two spheres, especially in regard to finance, are not really distinct.

<sup>2</sup> Romanes Lecture, 1930.

More detailed and carefully thought out proposals have come from Lord Eustace Percy.<sup>1</sup> His first principle is that responsibility for economic policy should be separated from responsibility for routine administration. "To this end, those sections of the Board of Trade and the Ministries of Labour, Agriculture and Transport, with the Departments of Mines and Overseas Trade, which are concerned with routine administration, should be left to discharge this function under the care of Parliamentary Under-secretaries, while the sections which are supposed to deal with economic development, together with the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, should be concentrated in a Ministry of Economic Development. This ministry should include a central Bureau of Statistics." He leans towards the idea of the Corporative State in suggesting that the Ministry of Economic Development should consult directly with whole industries—not with big confederations of employers' or workers' general organisations like the Federation of British Industries or the Trades Union Council.

Secondly, he puts forward a scheme by which Parliament can get into effective touch with local and industrial interests. He notes that the practice has grown up for the Government to conduct informal discussions of forthcoming legislation with the Associations of Local Authorities, the Federation of British Industries, the National Farmers' Union, or other appropriate bodies. It therefore seems desirable that this preliminary discussion should

<sup>1</sup> *Democracy on Trial*, 1931.

be given a more formal and expert character by the creation of a new deliberative body representing local administration, commercial and industrial organisations, agriculture, and trade unions. This body would have powers to advise on economic and social policy, and would have the statutory right and duty to report to Parliament on certain matters. It would be essentially a forum of discussion. It would not be elected; the members would be appointed by the executive for a term of years. It would work through committees, and not on Parliamentary lines.

Sir Arthur Salter, like Lord Eustace Percy, looks to the development of existing institutions and their more efficient use for a solution of our problem.<sup>1</sup> He thinks adaptation is better than special creation. We already have in this country important organisations representing big industrial concerns, financial interests, employers' federations, and trade unions. What is needed is that these bodies should acquire "institutional self-discipline"; they should learn to think not only of sectional interests but of the industry and the nation as a whole. By a broadening of their outlook, these institutions can themselves carry out the necessary adaptation of the competitive system with the minimum of delay and interference with economic and political freedom. He regards the function of government as being to co-ordinate the activities of these bodies in the public interest. For the formulation of central policy he looks to an Economic

<sup>1</sup> *The Framework of an Ordered Society*, 1933.

Advisory Council, working in the manner of an Economic General Staff. Hitherto, the Economic Council, as established here and abroad, has not been very successful, partly because the right type of organisation has not yet been found. Sir Arthur Salter thinks that if such a Council is to be effective, it must include not only a body capable of occasionally discussing general questions of policy but a flexible mechanism for bringing the best qualified specialists into consultation. It should normally work through small temporary committees. In time an enlarged Council, linked up with subsidiary group organisations might serve the purpose of an Economic Sub-Parliament.

Similar, again, is Mr. Harold Macmillan's scheme for the self-government of industry under Government guidance. It would seem, however, that whereas Sir Arthur Salter is prepared for a slow evolutionary movement, Mr. Macmillan desires a rapid transformation of competitive industry into a number of monopolised groups. Moreover, Government initiative, though not Government control, is required:—

“The Government could invite each industry by majority vote to submit its scheme for the integration of the industry into a national unit subject to a suitable central control. In the interests of the nation as a whole it ought to place a time limit on the discussions and reserve the right itself to prepare a scheme if the industry fails to respond. When the scheme has been formulated and the National Council for the industry appointed, then

the Government should confer on that authority the necessary statutory powers to carry through the scheme of integration and thereafter to preserve stability by the exercise of regulative powers.

"These Councils would be representative of the functional and geographical sub-divisions of the industry. . . . There would be no external interference with the conduct of the industry. Each industry or group of industries would be regarded as a self-governing unit."<sup>1</sup>

The work of these industrial bodies would be co-ordinated by a Central Economic Council to be composed of representatives of the Industrial Councils, of Banking and Finance, and of Labour; the executive heads of the Import Duties Advisory Committee; a small group of economists; and a number of scientific and technical experts. The Ministers of Transport and of Agriculture should be members, and the Council should sit under the chairmanship of a member of the Cabinet in close contact with the Prime Minister, either the President of the Board of Trade, or a specially appointed minister.

The schemes that I have outlined presuppose economic as well as political reconstruction, and of course the nature of the central political authority for economic affairs will be determined in part by the form of industrial reorganisation. But there is general agreement as to the need for a special organ for economic planning; and since

<sup>1</sup> Harold Macmillan, M.P., *Reconstruction; A Plea for a National Policy*, 1933, pp. 39-40.

any industrial reconstruction will have to be carried out under the stimulus and co-ordinative regulation of State authority, the creation of a special body to which Parliament can delegate the detailed direction of economic affairs need not be delayed. Moreover, apart from possible future developments, such a body is required for the work already being carried out by the State.

Meanwhile the friends of free institutions await some sign that those in charge of affairs are really considering the pressing problem of adapting Parliamentary forms to the necessary control of trade and industry. The longer the delay, the more difficult it will become to resist the urgency of those who claim that the only way out of our difficulties is the creation of an entirely new economic order in which a State Planning Commission for the centralised direction of all production would become in effect the supreme organ of government.

### § 7 *Changes in Methods of Legislation*

Even those progressives who are unwilling to go all the way with the Socialist League will agree that the present legislative machinery of Parliament is quite unsuited for carrying out the wide political and economic reconstruction that they would regard as imperative. As Mr. G. D. H. Cole says: "Parliament is a body which works on the assumption that the measures placed before it are to be debated line by line with the fullest freedom of criticism on points of detail as well as of principle; and this involves the further assumption that the body

of legislation placed before it will be sufficiently small to enable this democratic condition to be effectively observed. A Government working within the limitations of traditional constitutional practices cannot possibly hope to carry through more than two or three major measures in the course of a Parliamentary session.”<sup>1</sup> It is therefore essential to consider how legislative procedure may be expedited consistently with the maintenance of liberty.

In recent years Parliament, in spite of itself, has had to take measures to cut through its normal cumbersome and dilatory methods of working. The crisis of the Great War caused the Government to assume despotic powers under the Defence of the Realm Acts; and the industrial troubles of 1920 led to the Emergency Powers Act, giving the Crown power by proclamation, subject to the approval of Parliament within ten days, to take various measures to safeguard supplies and services necessary to the population. A similar short cut to rapid dictatorial action was taken by Mr. MacDonald’s Government in dealing with the financial crisis of 1931. It is significant that we have come to take it as a matter of course that the ordinary constitutional practice should be abrogated in times of exceptional stress.

For normal times the well-established and growing practice of legislating by Orders in Council and Departmental Regulation has acquired very great importance. Realising that it can no

<sup>1</sup> *The Intelligent Man’s Review of Europe To-day*, 1933, p. 598.



longer carry out its traditional function of laying down and discussing every detail in a new Act, Parliament frequently inserts a clause or clauses empowering the Minister of a particular Department to issue Orders having the force of law. In other words, the Minister, or some official of his department is given discretionary power to promulgate legislation of his own, in consonance with the general intention of the Act of Parliament. By 1904 the published Orders and Regulations of this kind then in force filled thirteen volumes. In 1927, of the forty-three Public Acts of Parliament passed, twenty-six contained a clause empowering "the Minister" to issue Orders; and in this same year 1,349 sets of Orders or Regulations were issued by the Departments, to become, of course, part of the law of the land.<sup>1</sup>

This development of constitutional practice is viewed with alarm in certain quarters as being a method by which the prerogative of the elected assembly can be invaded by an ever-encroaching bureaucracy. Lord Hewart, the Lord Chief Justice, put the legal point of view with cogency in *The New Despotism*. No doubt the present practice involves abuses which should be removed. For instance, Parliament at present has no effective control of these Orders and Regulations. Sometimes it is required that the Orders shall "lie on the table" for a period, but even so they are never reviewed and discussed by Parliament; more often they come into force simply by ministerial decree.

<sup>1</sup> Ramsay Muir: *How Britain is Governed*, 1930, pp. 60-61.

Opportunities for abuse could be obviated by setting up special Parliamentary committees charged with the duty of reviewing the delegated legislation issued by the various departments and ensuring that the intentions of Parliament are properly carried out and not exceeded. Again, it may be doubted whether it is desirable to give the Minister, as is sometimes done, the final decision in a particular matter: the effect of this is to secure ministerial action from the jurisdiction of the courts of law. The liberty of the citizen is certainly being infringed if he is not allowed to test the legality of the act of a Government department. Authoritative recommendations on the means for safeguarding the rights both of Parliament and of the individual citizen have been made by the Lord Chancellor's Committee on Ministers' Powers (1932).

It is unfortunate, however, that delegated legislation in general and Orders in Council in particular are likely to acquire an unnecessarily sinister character through the prominence given to their use in the programmes of the extreme parties of the Right and the Left. The present plan of campaign devised by the Socialist League for the immediate creation of a Socialist State—the abolition of the House of Lords, the passing of an Emergency Powers Act, and rapid legislation by means of Orders—is now familiar to the public, and in the minds of many people will cast discredit on a mode of procedure which intrinsically and in proper hands has much to recommend it. The

odium will be increased by the similar use of Orders which Sir Oswald Mosley's Fascist Party proposes to make if it seizes power. It is to be hoped that it will be possible to prevent the confusion of ends with means, though party propaganda will no doubt do its best to identify legislation by Orders with irresponsible dictatorship. The facts themselves, however, demand the extended use of such a method. Parliament can, for instance, lay down the general principle that the public should be freed from the torment of noise, but it must clearly be left to the responsible minister advised by his department to issue detailed rules as to where, and during what hours, the sounding of motor-horns is forbidden, and so on. Or, to take a more important instance, Parliament as a whole may decide on a certain tariff policy, but the detailed fixing of duties must come from a specially constituted body and must be embodied in special orders issued from time to time.

Any fears on this matter should, indeed, be allayed by the Report of the Committee on Ministers' Powers, which gives express approval, subject to certain safeguards, of the present practice of delegated legislation. What may still be a subject for discussion is how far it is desirable for this practice to be extended. There is a good deal to be said for considerable boldness. Sir Arthur Salter, who is certainly no revolutionary, has put forward a drastic suggestion which many would be prepared to support:—

"Suppose for example that Parliaments met for only two or three months of the year. In that time they could approve in main principle the legislation to be enacted for the ensuing year, leaving its detail to be worked out and applied by Order in Council; they could review the action of the Executive during the preceding year, and either, by approving it, give it a future lease of life, or, by censuring, secure a change and the appointment of a new Cabinet. Ministers would then have three-quarters of the year to work out, in conjunction with those best qualified to advise them, the general policy for which they had received a mandate."<sup>1</sup>

What is to be desired, in fact, is that Parliament should voluntarily abandon traditional rights and powers which it cannot effectively exercise and confine itself to the essential business of discussing the main lines of policy and giving its sanction to the action of the Executive. In other words, having chosen our leaders, we should allow them something of the respect and freedom due to leadership. We should take account of the fact that the successful conduct of modern government depends more and more on the trained judgment of executive officials and on the expert advice of specialists; and therefore the continual meddling by laymen, whether in the House of Commons or outside, serves no purpose but obstruction. Instead of being always concerned to maintain democratic checks on authority, we should rather take the

<sup>1</sup> *The Framework of an Ordered Society*, 1933, pp. 42-43.

line that we hand over a particular task to a responsible minister and his officials and trust them to perform it to the best of their ability without constant niggling interference. We can increase the penalty for failure or misconduct, if we will, but let us at any rate allow executive authority sufficient discretionary power to make rapid and effective action possible. It is strange that democracy, deriving its theory of government, as it does, from a special faith in the political worth of the individual human being, should yet show a thorough distrust of human nature when clothed with authority. While it insists that power shall be conferred by election, it refuses to believe in the integrity and public spirit of elected persons to the extent of giving them a free hand in carrying out a delegated task. Modern conditions surely demand a new attitude. When the House of Commons has been elected, its business should be to see to it that the ministers appointed to the Executive are both able and honest; then, while reserving to itself the right of vetoing acts of policy and censuring individual misconduct, it should leave the heads of departments to get on or get out.

### § 8 *The Civil Service*

We are now brought to a consideration of the position of the Civil Service in a modified Parliamentary régime. To give more freedom to the ministerial head of a department is, in effect, to give more power to the permanent officials. It is a common complaint that they already have

too much power, and that they are adding to that power year by year by means of the departmental legislation which they initiate. The evils of bureaucracy have become a familiar bugbear. That any professional body will develop its peculiar faults is to be expected, but so long as those faults do not include inefficiency and corruption they cannot be said to be very serious. And nobody believes the British Civil Service to be either inefficient or corrupt. The members of the higher branches of the Civil Service are recruited from the best brains in the country; their average of ability and their standard of conduct is certainly as high as that of the House of Commons from whom they take orders. These officials make the business of government a life-job; they are experts in their own sphere; and they can rarely derive great personal advantage from the adoption of a particular policy. To assume that their interests never extend beyond their own department, and that any scheme initiated by them is suspect, is surely absurd. The common distrust of the Civil Service is only another illustration of the failure of democracy to realise that public administration has long ceased to be a job for amateurs, and that the most important part of the technique of modern government is the proper use of the trained expert.

Reference should be made at this point perhaps to a charge levelled in certain quarters against the British Civil Service. It is said<sup>1</sup> that the higher ranks of the service are drawn exclusively from

<sup>1</sup>e.g., H. N. Brailsford, *Property or Peace?* 1934, pp. 73-74.

the middle-class, and being thus attached by training and class-interest to a particular set of beliefs, they form a powerful ally of those who resist any changes in a social order based on property. The exclusively middle-class character of the higher Civil Service was certainly a fact until the recent extensions of facilities for advanced education. To-day, however, a fair number of young people from working-class homes find their way to the universities by means of scholarships and eventually enter Government service<sup>1</sup>. A democratic state which thought such a proletarian leavening desirable could easily facilitate the process by the extended use of existing methods. The complaint is made, I fancy, that the working-class entrants to the Civil Service are absorbed by the bourgeoisie and thus lost to the cause of the class from which they sprang. I find it difficult to believe that these very intelligent sons and daughters of working-class families, who have experienced either narrowness of means or positive hardship in their early homes, and who still have relatives living in the same circumstances, will be uninfluenced by these facts when they help to shape policy in a Government department. That the higher Civil Service should be a class-preserve is certainly undesirable; but to avoid this situation is not so difficult as class-conscious critics would have us believe.

<sup>1</sup> In January, 1935, thirty-one vacancies in the Administrative Class of the Civil Service were filled. Of the candidates appointed, twenty-five were from the minor public schools or secondary schools.

In spite of current prejudices, there seems to be no reason why in a free system of government the Civil Service should not be given a definite and acknowledged part in the determination and working out of policy. When the general lines of a new measure have been laid down by Parliament (or, in the first place, by the Cabinet), the permanent officials of the department concerned might well be called into open consultation and their views might be publicly avowed. In this way the stigma now attaching to official pressure which has to be exerted behind the scenes would be removed, and the permanent officials would take their rightful place among the expert advisers called in to draft legislation.

In another way, too, the special knowledge and experience of the Civil Service could be turned to greater public advantage. In the course of their routine administration, the departments necessarily discover difficulties and anomalies in the working of Acts of Parliament and are able to devise improvements in method. In such matters as education, the poor law, or factory regulation they may from time to time set out detailed proposals for new legislation which seems to them desirable or even imperative. A large proportion of the bills considered by the House of Commons do, in fact, emanate from the departments concerned. Now, as things stand at present, such bills are subject to all the hazards of the party game. However desirable or urgent they may be in themselves, they have to wait until they will fit nicely into the



programme of a party in power, and until time can be found for discussing them. Sometimes a particular measure will be carried over from session to session and several years will elapse before it reaches the Statute-book. It is clear that departmental measures arising out of the requirements of an actual situation are in a different category from, say, controversial party bills: their consideration should not depend on the astuteness of official manœuvring; they should automatically come before the House of Commons, they should be given a clear run and either rejected or enacted without delay. By giving such business priority of treatment Parliament would avoid the present situation in which necessary changes in the law of the land remain for a long period overdue.

### § 9 *The Restoration of Confidence in Free Institutions*

Our consideration of the changes desirable in the existing political order has so far been directed towards governmental machinery. To carry out the modifications regarded on all hands as necessary requires only the will to decisive action. It is the sort of thing that the dictator does quite simply by a stroke of the pen. But even if we suppose such action to be taken to-morrow, it would not in itself cure the ills of democracy. The defects in Parliamentary mechanism are the symptoms rather than the cause of the disease: they spring from what is fundamentally a moral failure. It is this moral failure that we must now examine.

We shall not proceed far before we come upon difficulties which the conventional apologists of democracy generally ignore. We shall face them squarely, however, in the belief that in no other way can we find means of arresting the present disintegration of the democratic system.

The core of the situation is this. Among the classes whose co-operation is most valuable there is more than indifference; there is a manifest lack of confidence in the efficacy of present political modes of action. While politicians still make a show of believing in the myth of democracy, the bulk of the more intelligent citizens have come to realise that a good deal of traditional democratic doctrine is humbug. In other words, the very people on whom the proper working of representative institutions depends have no heart in the business. They know that the intelligent few are always outvoted, and that collective decisions are those of the mob. Under the present system of universal franchise and unrestricted propaganda, an appeal to the people on any critical issue involves the almost certain triumph of irrationality. It is not to be wondered at that the thoughtful person sets no great store by his right to vote; nor is it surprising that he neglects the free citizen's privilege and duty of bringing persuasion to bear on his fellows, for he knows that in using rational argument he is in hopeless rivalry with the alluring clap-trap of the popular Press. It is easy to complain of public "apathy" in political affairs, but we shall never be able to cure it until we frankly admit

that it has a genuine basis in the knowledge that under modern conditions the effectiveness of intelligent individual action is reduced to a minimum.

Can anything be done to restore the confidence of the best type of elector in his ability to influence policy? Can he be made to feel that he has a part to play in any way comparable to that of a member of a ruling Communist or Fascist party? The fate of free institutions depends on our ability to find answers to these questions. In proceeding to suggest my own tentative solutions I shall deal first with electoral organisation: this is in a sense as much a matter of machinery as the constitution of the Cabinet and the House of Commons, but it deserves special treatment in view of its intimate bearing on the morale of the citizen-body. Secondly, I shall consider what action can be taken to arrest the rapid corruption of public opinion. Thirdly, I shall attempt to indicate remedies for the deep-seated spiritual malady which is the ultimate cause of the decay of democracy. The last of these subjects involves broad educational issues which must be reserved for a separate chapter.

### § 10 *The Franchise*

As the result of the efforts of the democratic reformers during the past century we have reached the state at which every adult, male and female, has a vote: we all go to the polling-booths as a matter of course,—just as we use the public highways or accept free education for our children. With this attitude towards the franchise, there

is, I submit, something fundamentally wrong. The vote may be viewed from two aspects. It is, first, the symbol of equality of treatment, and as such should be available to every citizen as a right. But, secondly, it is the means whereby a Government is created. Now, except on the untenable assumption that every individual has something of value to contribute to political action, it is absurd to suggest that everyone should be allowed to assist in the choice of Government as a matter of course and of right. What such a theory amounts to in practice is that the millions of people who never take the slightest interest in public affairs in ordinary times are given the opportunity, every five years or less, to endorse their newspapers' views and drown the voices of the minority who take these matters seriously. In so far as the possession of a vote confers the power of determining the complexion of the Government, it should surely be regarded, not as a right automatically acquired, but as a privilege,—a privilege attainable by everyone, but not without a certain amount of effort and trouble indicating a real desire to exercise it.

If this way of looking at the matter is accepted—and no other way accords with actualities—we are led to the conclusion that some kind of limitation of the franchise is necessary. There are many, of course, who will condemn any such suggestion out of hand as putting the clock back and reversing the policy for which liberalism fought so long and so successfully. We need not, however, be deterred by the disapproval of those who prefer illusions

to realities. The time has come when the restriction of the franchise must be given reasonable discussion.

The practical problem we are confronted with is how to confer the privilege of voting in such a way as to give intelligent and informed opinion a chance to make itself heard above the clamour of the mob. Any solution of that problem must involve the exclusion of those who are demonstrably unfit to exercise such a privilege. What is the test of fitness? Obviously it can only be an educational one. In the earlier days of democratic institutions the notion that the franchise should be subject to an educational test could be, and was, pooh-poohed as hopelessly Utopian. So long as education was the privilege of the few such an idea was indeed impracticable. But now that we are well within sight of the time when reasonable educational facilities will be available for all, the objection loses its force. As soon as every child capable of profiting has the opportunity of receiving post-primary education up to at least the age of sixteen, it will not be difficult to impose some form of educational qualification for the vote. A suitable form of school-leaving certificate might be made to serve the purpose. We already lay down the rule that no one can enter a profession who fails to matriculate or pass an equivalent examination. It is absurd, therefore, to say that a similar test for those about to enter upon the duties of citizenship is impracticable. Proper provision would have to be made, of course, for hard cases, such as that of an individual who for any reason has missed

part of his early schooling. A special examination might be held periodically under the direction of the Civil Service Commissioners, for which any adult citizens who wished to qualify for a vote might sit. Naturally the form that the school-leaving and the special examination would take must be a matter for careful consideration. But such consideration is hardly necessary here. It is sufficient for the present to get people accustomed to the proposal. Until the feasibility of the general principle is recognised, it is useless to bother with details.

I am prepared to believe that, except under a dictatorship, it might prove very difficult and perhaps impossible to induce the British people to submit to a limitation of the franchise which took the form of simply depriving a considerable section of the adult population of all voting-power. It might be necessary, therefore, to proceed with greater circumspection. We might give one vote to every adult, and one or more additional votes to those who satisfied certain specified conditions. Such extra votes might be granted, for instance, to those who attain special educational qualifications, or achieve professional eminence, or hold municipal or other public office, or do valuable work in recognised social organisations, or are qualified ministers of religion, or who reach important positions in business and technology. Even the first vote, granted to all, however, should not be conferred automatically as at present. It should be made necessary for the citizen to apply for

it; and the method of application should be made sufficiently troublesome to deter those who had no real interest in the matter. The setting up of the machinery for allotting additional votes might cause difficulty, but the obstacles should not be insuperable.

Of course, any proposal for the extension of the principle of plural voting would meet with the opposition of the doctrinaire democrats who are still to be heard condemning the existence of the present university franchise. But we may permit ourselves to hope that the perverse tenacity to theory which results in the exaltation of mere majorities above intelligence will eventually yield to the stress of the times.

A word should be said perhaps about the possibility of changing the basis of voting from territorial to industrial constituencies. Sir Oswald Mosley is trying to popularise a specious, half-baked scheme of "occupational franchise" derived from the idea of the Italian Corporative State. He assures us that in the new British Fascist State "the people . . . will secure . . . a truer representation in that they will vote within their own industries and occupations for candidates whom they know well on subjects with which they are familiar. An engineer shall vote as an engineer; and thus bring into play, not an amateur knowledge of foreign and domestic politics, but a lifelong experience of the trade in which he is engaged; he will vote in common with others of similar experience, and will give the reasoned decision of a technician in

his particular trade in a choice between members of that trade.”<sup>1</sup> The fallacy here is almost too obvious to need comment. The engineer-elect who, under a system of occupational franchise, would vote for an engineer-candidate for the national Parliament should consider that candidate’s ability not as an engineer but as a leader in public affairs: for this purpose the elector’s professional interest and competence are quite irrelevant. It has still to be demonstrated, indeed, that even in professional matters the average member of a trade union or similar organisation displays that keener sense of public duty which might give an occupational vote greater significance than a local vote. The fact seems to be, on the contrary, that in the democratically organised professional associations there are to be found the same energy in the leading spirits and the same relative indifference in the bulk of the members as are to be found in any political constituency. It will be observed, of course, that what is here said about the occupational franchise does not necessarily affect the question of the Corporative State. This form of organisation may or may not be desirable on economic grounds; the electoral difficulty remains where it was.

### § 11 *The Personnel of the House of Commons*

If the first need is to restore the confidence of the politically-minded citizen in his power to influence affairs, the second is to restore his confidence in the ability and character of politicians.

<sup>1</sup> *The Greater Britain*, 1934 ed., p. 43.



He must be made to feel that the choice he is called upon to exercise between rival Parliamentary candidates is a real and not a sham one, and that he can rely on their personal capacity, whatever he may think of their programme. At present he is too often asked to choose between two or three people who are quite unknown to him, and who contest his constituency for no better reason than that they have been sent there by the party organisations. A drastic change in the party system is necessary if candidates are to establish proper touch with electors.

What can we do to ensure that the candidates who offer themselves shall be the best possible? The revision of the franchise which I have recommended would have some effect in this direction. By reducing the influence of the politically unfit it would increase the value of a rational appeal to electors. The present system puts a premium on the candidate whose chief assets are fluency in platform platitudes and skill in baby-kissing, while it discourages the more squeamish from ever attempting a political career. If the average intelligence of the electorate could be raised by eliminating the many whose political capacity must always be negligible, we might reasonably hope for a higher standard of public discussion, and therefore for better politicians.

Other means towards the same end are not difficult to suggest. If we want the right men to enter the House of Commons, they must be given something more inspiring to do when they get

there than to walk through division-lobbies at the command of the party whips. A possible solution of this problem is to be found in the proposed establishment of a number of specialist Standing Committees of the House, enabling rank and file members to use their particular knowledge and experience in scrutinising legislation, accounts, and Ministerial Orders. Again, it should be made as easy as possible for men and women in all walks of life to become candidates for election. The right of every citizen to serve in the public assembly should be made effective by removing all purely economic obstacles. The small salary which members now receive does not meet the case. The candidate who cannot find the £1,000 for his own election expenses, and who has to sacrifice his normal business or profession in order to fulfil Parliamentary duties, is necessarily bound hand and foot to the party machine. The best men are those most likely to set the highest value on personal independence.

From the rank and file members of Parliament emerge in due course the leaders of democracy,—those who occupy key-positions in the ministry. It is generally admitted that the democracies are failing in producing leaders of outstanding ability. What is to be done? By raising the general quality of the national assembly we shall naturally improve our chances of finding the exceptional people we need to take control of affairs. It would also be worth while considering whether ministerial office should, if necessary, be given to persons who are

not members of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. On this matter Mr. H. N. Brailsford has made some sound observations:—"A leader commonly rises to eminence through qualities that are rarely, if ever, combined with the objective and scientific mind that should be in charge of a society that plans its own life. The romantic platform hero, the gifted actor, the wary Parliamentary tactician, the architect of his own career—these are not the men we want. It happens but seldom that a man is both a skilful politician and an able administrator. . . . I am inclined to think that the men who hold responsible positions, whether civil servants or others, in the various organs of planning and control should not remain anonymous and obscure. Their reports and proposals to the Cabinet should in general be published. Among these men an ideal Minister might sometimes be found. To me, at least, the reason is not apparent why Ministers must always be Members of Parliament. . . . The House carries its jealousy of 'outsiders' to absurd lengths and in this way confines our choice of leaders to the professional party men. No other Parliament is so exclusive."<sup>1</sup>

### § 12 *The Control of Propaganda*

I have said that the success of Parliamentary institutions depends ultimately on the active support of citizens of the best type, and that this support is not likely to be given in sufficient measure until the confidence of such citizens is restored both

<sup>1</sup> *Property or Peace?* p. 270

in themselves as political units and in politicians as their representatives. One further condition is essential. Democratic government must grasp the nettle of private propaganda and assert public authority against those who seek to usurp political power for purely mercenary ends. No government can be strong which is at the mercy of irresponsible agencies exploiting the modern technique of manufacturing popular sentiment. And in these days of dictatorships no government can afford to be weak.

Democratic rule—in a more obvious way than any other kind of rule—rests on the sanction of public opinion. But we must be quite realistic in defining public opinion. It is not something resulting from the free activity of a multiplicity of rational minds. It is something which has always been in a greater or less degree subject to the control of dominating personalities and the impetus of obscure herd emotions, and which to-day, owing to the invention of mighty engines of propaganda, can to a large extent be created at will by any human agencies able to operate on a sufficiently large scale. That which we designate public opinion tends more and more to become merely the amplified expression of the ideas of a few individuals or groups. Reason and spontaneous personal opinion are stifled in the commercialised atmosphere created by the Press, the cinema, and advertisement-ridden industry. Government has to stand against a constant stream of obstructive criticism which comes, not from

genuine political conviction, but from the control which self-seeking economic interests exert over the organs of mass-suggestion.

Government in our time has, in fact, to confront a new and insidious danger. The dictators meet the situation by resolutely taking all power of propaganda into their own hands and using it to mould public opinion. Democratic governments, in the name of liberty, do nothing at all. They quite rightly recoil from the policy of autocracy, but they also take no measures to preserve public opinion in a state of health. They are trying to apply the doctrine of freedom of thought and expression as it was stated in the age which knew not the cinema, the cheap Press, and newspapers with circulations running into millions. They have yet to realise that the present age requires a new interpretation of this doctrine, if the foundations of free institutions, and indeed of our culture, are to be preserved from crumbling.

In Great Britain we have mercifully tempered the independence of the broadcasting authority with public control. The cinema is in commercial hands; but, as its aim is chiefly entertainment, it does not directly affect the political attitude of the populace as it does in countries like Russia. The chief factor in the creation of popular opinion and sentiment on current topics is therefore the newspaper. Now we cannot too often remind ourselves that in speaking of the newspaper in this connection we mean journals like the *Daily Express* or the *Daily Herald* of to-day, and not *The Times*

or the *Daily Telegraph* of fifty years ago. Since the liberal doctrine of the freedom of the Press was formulated, the newspaper has undergone a radical transformation. Whereas a daily paper's chief aim was formerly to give reliable news and leading-articles setting forth a consistent political policy, both news and views have now become subsidiary to the main purpose of the journal, which is to provide mass-entertainment and to carry advertisement. The result is that the selection of the news and the general policy on political and economic affairs are determined by the need to attract a larger and larger circle of readers. A particular policy is pursued, not necessarily because the directors of the paper believe it to be in the public interest, but because it is likely to increase the value of advertising space and hence to raise the advertising revenue which is the principal source of income. The business of news-gathering and the daily publication of opinion, which is a public service of vital importance, has become so inextricably bound up with purely commercial activity, and is indeed so dominated by it, that the traditional principle of the freedom of the Press very largely ceases to apply. At a time when most of the European Press is muzzled, we are not likely to underestimate the importance of allowing the newspapers of a politically free country to publish what news and opinions they will, so long as they are honest in what they do; but we have still to consider whether they shall be permitted to withhold and distort news at

pleasure and quite irresponsibly to manufacture public opinion to suit the whims of their proprietors or the pockets of their shareholders.

The degradation of the popular Press is by now a hackneyed theme, but we are still as far as ever from doing anything to mitigate or remove the evil. We ignore the fact that access to an impartial record of important events—which is the first condition of a healthy public opinion—is becoming more and more difficult for the ordinary newspaper-reader. A correspondent to *The Times* lately pointed out that in the *Daily Mail's* account of the first three days of the Second Reading Debate on the Government of India Bill one speaker only (the Secretary of State) was mentioned as supporting Government policy, while twelve (one of whom spoke for exactly two and a half minutes) were reported as opposing it. In a letter defending his position the Associate Editor of the *Daily Mail* threw a searchlight on the methods of the popular Press. "I have little space," he wrote, "to give to reports of the proceedings of Parliament: and I propose to do what I have done in the past, and devote as much as I can to speeches of those members who are against surrender in India".<sup>1</sup> For many people this was startling in its candour. They had taken partisan comment as a matter of course; but the cynical defence of partisan manipulation of news came as a shock. Of course, in theory, the reader who suspects that his newspaper is tampering with the facts has the option

<sup>1</sup> Letter to *The Times*, 12th February, 1935.

of consulting another paper with a different point of view. But we know that, in practice, the number of people who are ever likely to do this is so small as to be a negligible factor in majority-politics.

We also continue to allow what can only be described as purely wanton interference in public affairs by the great organs of propaganda. Consider the recent intermittent association of Lord Rothermere with Sir Oswald Mosley's Fascist Party. Early in 1934 the *Daily Mail* and the other newspapers in the group began a vigorous campaign in support of the Blackshirts. Lord Rothermere himself contributed widely puffed articles explaining the Fascist programme. Young men were advised to enrol in Mosley's battalions, and photographs of the recruiting were duly shown. Sir Oswald Mosley was, of course, given opportunity of stating his own case. Not only did the *Daily Mail* advocate Fascism in England; it proclaimed the virtues of Hitlerism in Germany. Then, after about a month, the Blackshirt policy of the *Daily Mail* was dropped as suddenly as it was begun. The reason? It was generally said by those in a position to know that the stunt proved damaging to advertising revenue and to sales. In an interview reported in the *World's Press News*, Lord Rothermere was asked whether his support of the Blackshirts had been a crusade or an incident like the *Daily Mail's* earlier efforts on behalf of standard bread and sweet peas. "An incident, definitely an incident," replied his Lordship. But the incident was not



closed. A few months later Lord Rothermere again took up the Fascist cause, and again dropped it, this time with a handsome valedictory letter to Sir Oswald explaining carefully why their paths diverged. And again it was rumoured in Fleet Street that the change of policy was not unconnected with the curve of sales. There is a tendency in certain quarters to dismiss this kind of thing as causing a slight ripple in public feeling but having no very serious effects. No doubt the section of the public which thinks is unmoved by the political stunts of the popular Press. But in a system depending on the counting of heads it is not this section which wields the power. Moreover, it must be remembered that such influences are at work in times of crisis, when the public mind is particularly open to suggestion, and thus public policy may be swayed by one or two great syndicates for whom immediate private interest is at least as important as ultimate national welfare.

What should be the attitude of the Government of a free country towards the menace of private propaganda as carried on by the huge commercial organisations of modern times? The one principle to be safeguarded is that no restrictions shall be placed on the expression of honest criticism of State institutions or policy. Now if the conditions under which opinion is published are such that sincerity is possible only by accident, it is difficult to deny the right of the State to interfere. Or, to put the matter in another way, it is the duty of the democratic State to secure the genuine

freedom of the Press by removing those influences to which it is now in bondage.

How is this to be done? An obvious method would be to impose a strict control of newspaper advertising. Its complete elimination is even worth considering. Such a suggestion may be so startling to many people as to seem chimerical. I put it forward in all seriousness as the only means—short of making journalism a public service—of restoring true independence to the Press. There is no reason in nature why the supply of news and of comment thereon should be associated with the display of commercial catalogues. It may be said, indeed, that there is no adequate reason why advertising by any medium should be countenanced on its present enormous scale. In spite of the insincere stuff about Service that forms the staple of speeches at Conventions of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising, we all know that most present-day trade publicity work is fundamentally immoral and probably much of it is even commercially less profitable than its authors would have us believe. Those who maintain that our economic system could not function if the advertising expert were not there to find markets and create demand for the enormous potential output of the modern factory are merely giving an argument to those who want that system to be scrapped. An industrial organisation which depends ultimately on dishonest propaganda is not worth keeping in being. But we must not pursue this general question. Our immediate

concern is with the desirability of separating advertisement from journalism. Such a course would certainly remove the main incentive to that excessive inflation of circulation which causes the worst abuses in present-day journalism; it would remove also that fear of powerful commercial interests which now deters a "free" Press from saying what it really thinks.

The drastic reduction of advertising revenue might, however, lead to another danger unless the situation were carefully watched. Commercial interests might resort to direct subsidies to secure their influence on public opinion. It is well known that the French business community is disinclined to avail itself of newspaper publicity: thus hardly any of the Paris daily papers can live on their sales and advertisements, and they depend largely upon subsidies from the Government and from such organisations as the Bank of France, the Comité des Forges and the Comité des Houillères. In the evidence given before the Commission of Inquiry into the Stavisky scandals it was revealed that M. Camille Aymard received 50,000 francs from Stavisky while he was editing the *Liberté*; again, it appears that one of the fraudulent Stavisky companies was able to obtain publication on the centre page of each of five leading Parisian dailies of an advertisement in which it was falsely suggested that the company was guaranteed by the Government.<sup>1</sup>

This kind of corruption could no doubt be prevented if journalists were more highly organised

<sup>1</sup>*Observer*, 20th May, 1934.

as a profession than they now are. An association of journalists having the standing and the prestige of the bodies representing the medical and legal professions could do much to enforce a code of conduct consistent with a public service. It is only too obvious that with the coming of any form of dictatorship the corps of journalists will be the first to suffer at any rate a nominal loss of all freedom; whether, in actual fact, their position would be much worse as members of a corporation controlled by a National Ministry of Propaganda than it is when they are bound by the policy of the Press Lords is a doubtful point. However, if they intend to organise themselves, they would be well advised to lose no time. The suggestion has already been made by the Institute of Journalists that a Select Committee of the House of Commons should be set up to consider whether journalism should have a statutory General Council to supervise its activities. The matter is still pending.

The rigid control of advertising in conjunction with the proper organisation of the journalistic profession might perhaps serve to prevent the worst abuses of propaganda in the democratic State. Probably, however, our easiest way out of the difficulty would be to bring daily and Sunday journalism under the jurisdiction of a semi-public body like the B.B.C. In this way we should at once eliminate the deplorable results of commercial interference and clear the field for really free and impartial criticism. The B.B.C. has been working

long enough now to enable us to judge of the success of this type of organisation. Of course, there will always be carping at such a body, but few people would seriously dispute, I think, that, allowing for human fallibility, the B.B.C. has discharged its task of providing a forum of discussion with remarkable impartiality. There is no reason why daily journalism conducted on similar lines should not be equally satisfactory.

With regard to weekly journals and other periodicals, it might be possible to allow the continuance of private ownership provided that their dependence on advertising was reduced. In the nature of things they are not exposed to the same dangers as the great dailies. Moreover, it is desirable that new avenues for the expression of opinion should always be open. Sir Oswald Mosley, for instance, must be able to publish his *Blackshirt* as the means of publicly advocating his cause. Such a periodical has a perfectly clear object, and it will affect only those people who are sufficiently interested in political matters to buy it. It is otherwise if one of the popular dailies takes up Sir Oswald Mosley's cause. We have then no reason to suppose that Fascism is being treated any differently from standard bread, insurance, or the works of Dickens.

### § 13 Conclusion

Some such revision of Parliamentary forms as I have outlined is necessary to arrest the decay of democratic government and to safeguard political

and civil liberty. It is clear, however, that my suggestions involve certain limitations not hitherto countenanced in democratic theory. In the interests of strong and decisive government, for instance, we are to allow a more efficient Cabinet greater immunity from Parliamentary heckling; the elected assembly is to delegate some of its most important functions to a body that may not be so directly amenable to public control; Ministers are to be confirmed in their power of legislating by Orders in Council on the assumption that they will use that power wisely; the bureaucracy is also to be trusted rather than vilified and treated as though its every action must be open to inspection by deputations of local busy-bodies. In short, since we regard government as an art requiring training, experience, and expert skill, we are discouraging merely meddlesome interference, whether by the House of Commons in the business of the Executive or by the electorate in the conduct of the House of Commons. In fact, we are trying to give the necessary place in government to the principles of leadership and deference to special knowledge and experience. And this involves a change in our conception of the political rights of the ordinary citizen. While we think it just that everyone, irrespective of wealth or class, should receive consideration as a human being, we do not think it either just or expedient that everyone, irrespective of ability and training, should be given the same power to influence public policy. We frankly abandon the pretence that the basis of democratic

government lies in the political capacity of the average man: we prefer to acknowledge and make use of the obvious fact that the efficient working of any system depends on the minority of superior intelligence and more active social conscience. We cannot therefore regard voting-power as something to be distributed indiscriminately in accordance with a spurious natural right; we look upon it rather as a privilege to be deliberately sought and won. Further, the enormous spread and intensification of propaganda leads us to reinterpret the principle of freedom of expression. In order to prevent the public mind from being doped beyond recovery and to enable the still small voice of reason to be heard amid the din of the loud speakers playing upon the public mind, we must as far as possible dissociate the expression of opinion from purely commercial activities; and this cannot be done without some interference with a liberty, or rather licence, that is now exercised.

It may be said that these interferences in sum amount to a considerable curtailment of the freedom hitherto characteristic of a democratic community. It may be so. But it is a curtailment of shams rather than of realities. In the transformed system the individual would acquire new dignity and confidence as the member of a community in which the rational control of human affairs is at least within possibility.

## CHAPTER V

### EDUCATION FOR FREEDOM

#### § 1 *The Cultural Problem*

THE remodelling of our political institutions is immediately practicable; it is overdue; and it is an essential step towards the safeguarding of freedom. But in itself it is not enough. The cause of freedom is imperilled ultimately by the spiritual attitude of the age towards it. Changes in organisation will be ineffective unless there is real determination to make the new system work,—unless, that is to say, the belief in rational methods exerted through peaceful persuasion is re-created, and the sense of individual responsibility can be instilled in those members of the community who have most to bring to public service. The overhaul of Parliamentary forms would, of course, assist in the development of the new attitude, for in an efficiently organised state the rights and duties of citizenship would acquire more genuine importance. But in the last resort the problem of creating a far wider and more active support of free institutions is an educational one. A long-term educational effort must therefore be initiated concurrently with the short-term policy for the reorganisation of political machinery.



At this point I must be allowed to repeat that by an "educational effort" I do not intend what has usually been meant by those who tell us that, if democracy is to survive, "we must educate our masters." There will be no pretence of trying to raise the intellectual level of the majority to the point at which they may become politically competent citizens. This can never be done, even if we provide free secondary and university education for all, unlimited leisure, and the most skilfully devised courses in civics and political philosophy. I urge something far less chimerical,—that we should turn to the best account the creative ability and moral energy of the few, that we should foster in them the requisite intellectual attitude and instil into them a sense of duty to the community. As regards the politically inert masses we cannot hope to do much more than develop in them a healthy response to leadership and preserve them from the worst forms of propaganda.

Yet, even if we abandon the impossible for the possible and concentrate our efforts on the intelligent few, the task will be difficult enough. Traditional democratic principles have to a large extent lost the virtue of a compelling idea. Thus democracy is ceasing to provide a channel for political idealism and social effort. Yet, as the dictators know well enough, it is the spirit of service that gives drive to a political movement. There is plenty of energy waiting to be used in the cause of human betterment, but it cannot be tapped until men's imagination

has been touched and they have seen the vision of the new order which their efforts may bring into being. Democracy is being deprived of imaginative appeal because it is associated with ideas and methods which no longer command general acceptance. Can a reformed democracy which sheds outmoded nineteenth-century trappings and appears as a new and more vigorous expression of liberty be made to evoke true enthusiasm and a desire to serve?

I believe it can; but only if we enter upon the task with full realisation of its difficulty. The difficulty arises precisely because we put rational ideas in the fore-front of our programme, and because we refrain from the unscrupulous exploitation of propaganda. To provide a rallying-cry for the hosts who follow the dictator is far easier than to propound a creed to win the support of intelligence as well as enthusiasm. The spell-binding demagogue can easily convert patriotism into violent and intolerant nationalism. His appeal is non-rational and is made to the most elementary human feelings. Like the advertiser and the owners of the gutter-press he knows how much less effective is a logical argument than a few simple slogans. Hitler's careful study of the arts of propaganda as seen in symbols, uniforms, and theatrical effects generally is a matter of common knowledge. As Mr. E. A. Mowrer tells us, "His propagandists are instructed to the full in the effectiveness of catch-words repeated a thousand times: Third Empire; Germany, awake! perish

the Jew; the 'System'; treaty of shame; Germany's bondage; tribute; November criminals; dictatorship; national pride; spirit of the front; voice of the blood; fundamental instinct; nordicising; stab in the back; un-German Marxism; red sub-humanity; red murder; party bonzes; ethics of pity; revenge; oppressors; hereditary enemy; heads will roll! If ever a single catch-word begins to go badly, it is cancelled from the orators' vocabulary. When a poster fails to work, it disappears overnight, although thousands have been posted up throughout the country."<sup>1</sup> Hitler knows the average German, and, it must be said, the average human being. He acts upon that knowledge, and he has his reward.

We who seek social good through the application of rational principles to human affairs cannot advocate our cause so simply, so directly, and with such immediate effect. But it must be our purpose to link the idea of liberty to a social programme which will touch both intellect and emotion. Ultimately, of course, we seek freedom as the indispensable condition of the full growth of human personality. But freedom acquires meaning only in a social context. We regard it as the vital element in the society in which we live. It is the final product of the greatest forces which have moulded our civilisation—Hellenic thought, the Christian tradition, and modern science. In preserving it, we are preserving our culture itself. But our defence of freedom is not merely conservative

<sup>1</sup> *Germany Puts the Clock Back*, 1933, p. 269.

in aim. We believe that the advance towards human well-being which the development of rational thought has made possible can be continued only in the atmosphere of freedom. Without freedom to investigate and to criticise, the intellectual solutions to which we pin our faith will never be found. On the other hand, it is our conviction that with the aid of scientific thinking we can so organise the world politically and economically as to provide the necessary material conditions for human happiness. So far, science, with all its triumphs, has not been properly harnessed to the service of man. It has given us marvellous machines, but it has been allowed to remain neutral in regard to human ends. It has produced at the same time motor-cars and submarines, insulin and poison-gas, cheap mass-produced goods and unemployment. We look forward to the time when scientific thought, directed into new channels, will remove those obstacles to human welfare that now seem insuperable. We put our trust, in fact, in a great expansion of the social sciences. Such an expansion is hardly to be imagined save in communities where liberty of thought prevails. Science cannot co-exist with the dogmatic preaching of the class-war, racial superiority, the nobility of the peasant, and the value of the big family. When the form of the State is settled by authority, social experiment in the long run either ceases altogether or proceeds only on prescribed lines. Again, the future wide-ranging plans for the organisation of world economic resources must

envisage an international order in which there is as free an interchange of goods as of ideas. The narrow expedient of self-sufficiency which is the economic expression of inflated nationalism may have its attraction in the immediate state of trade disorganisation, but we cannot think of it as more than a temporary phase. We may never return to Free Trade as understood by the nineteenth-century individualists, but we cannot abandon the ideal that there shall be free intercourse between nations as between individuals. Further, we believe that, in order to bring about the new order we desire, we must work for the settled peace of the world. Peace is at once the result and the expression of the rational temper. War on a grand scale is the one thing which will delay and perhaps for ever prevent the establishment of the great human society; and the most likely cause of war is the conflict of intensified nationalisms fed on fear and intolerance and cut off from knowledge of the external world.

Such a creed of humanism goes far beyond the stale nineteenth-century doctrine of progress. We who hold such a belief to-day are not likely to be led astray by the delusion of an automatic advance towards a predestined millennium. The experience of the past few years has sufficiently warned us that the goal of human welfare is still a long way off, and is to be won only by a sustained effort of will. We may well smile at the earlier notion that *laissez-faire* economics together with free education and Parliamentary government would

naturally issue in universal peace and prosperity. We know that the new society has to be built by deliberate and prolonged effort, and we have scarcely yet reached the point of being able to draw the plans.

Here, surely, is a task challenging the full power of mind. For all who are capable of appreciating its full import, its appeal is both intellectual and emotional. Can it be made to evoke the necessary emotional response in the masses? That the generality of mankind can be fired by the vision of a new and better social order based on the scientific exploitation of natural resources is evident enough from what has happened in Russia. I do not think so badly of human nature as to suppose that the Russian economic effort could never have been made if the ideal had not been adulterated with the deification of Lenin and sovereignty of the proletariat. It is no doubt more difficult to raise cheers for the nameless scientist than for the personal dictator. But with popular imagination filled as it is by the marvels of invention and technical progress, it should not be impossible to achieve a transfer of interest to the scientific solution of social problems on peaceful lines. That such ideas do in fact make a very wide appeal is evident from the enormous sales of the writings of H. G. Wells. The reason why this popular enthusiasm is not translated into social action is that the orthodox political parties fail to produce any programme with the necessary inspiring sweep. Until they show unmistakably that they are

determined on measures to make scientific advance issue in social good, and until they make genuine demands on personal service to that end, public apathy towards politics is not likely to be cured.

§ 2 *The Need for a New Orientation of Education*

What practical measures can be taken to inculcate a cultural ideal appropriate to a modern free society? Putting the answer to this question in the most general way, I would say that education must be given an orientation which is at present lacking. We must cease to identify freedom of thought and teaching with entire absence of social purpose. My remarks on this topic will apply particularly to advanced education because, as I have pointed out, our main concern should be with those who have the capacity to make a real contribution to political life.<sup>1</sup>

On the intellectual side our present higher curricula seem to aim at little beyond giving a certain amount of knowledge in conventionally delimited fields, a training in particular mental processes and techniques, and in some cases definite vocational preparation. On the moral side, we hear a good deal about the "development of character", but those who are most vocal about this are usually least precise in defining the sort of character they wish to produce. The purposelessness of our educational courses is seen most glaringly

<sup>1</sup> In this section I state certain ideas in summary fashion. I have discussed them fully and made definite suggestions for the reform of higher education in *If the Blind Lead*.

in the universities, where, at the undergraduate stage, the best students are given what is in effect a purely technical training in a specialised department of intellectual activity, and, at the post-graduate stage, a fetish is made of mechanical and often useless research. If there is any goal beyond the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake, it is not discoverable from the syllabuses or the tenor of the teaching. Immersed in his particular specialism, constantly occupied in the sterilities of scholarship or the minutiae of scientific technique, the university student is definitely discouraged from relating his studies to broad human interests.

The autocracies have seen the importance of changing all this. For futile intellectualism and unenlightened research they substitute a training directed towards a clear-cut object. The business of schools and universities is to turn out good Communists, or Fascists, or Nazis, as the case may be. Such an end is, of course, the negation of all that a free society stands for. But what is our alternative? It is clear that we must consider those to whom we give advanced education not only as individual human beings but as citizens. Hitherto we have quite wrongly assumed that the disinterested pursuit of knowledge was in itself a training both for individual living and for citizenship in a free country. But it is only too obvious that academic pursuits may be entirely divorced from an interest in public affairs and a willingness to shoulder public burdens. We may urge, of course, that our students are being brought



up in the atmosphere of liberty. But this, valuable as it is, hardly seems enough. We do not get very far by telling young people, in effect: "You may discuss any theories or beliefs you like, but you are under no obligation to hold any of them; you can acquire any skill you choose, but what use you make of that skill is entirely your own concern; society does not expect of you any special attitude towards life or any particular mode of conduct." In opposition to the intellectual tyrannies now in fashion we must, of course, assert more strongly than ever the value of free discussion and unfettered judgment; but we must also urge some positive creed. All who pass through institutions of higher education must be made to realise that the freedom they enjoy is to be used for social welfare. In their studies they will be developing their own individuality and in most cases preparing themselves for a profession; but the individuality and the profession must be thought of as part of the complex of society. As potential leaders they must be trained to undertake that drudgery of thought which is essential to the achievement of great human ends.

If students are to acquire this new attitude towards knowledge and their place in society, we need a thorough overhaul of secondary and university education with the object of producing coherent and self-consistent courses having an intelligible relation to social purpose, and carrying students beyond mere "subjects" to vital problems. We must get rid of a good deal of traditional lumber

and give emphasis to those aspects of knowledge that have special contemporary value. The present system of specialisation should be drastically modified. One of our chief aims should be to bring home the fact that specialisation, though necessary in the modern world, is only a stage on the road; there comes a point at which detailed work in a narrow field must be resumed in a co-ordinative process making learning available for human welfare. In order that the essential problems of our age may receive competent treatment, the social sciences should occupy a position at the centre of academic studies instead of at the fringe as at present. It might prove desirable to demand that all university students should have grounding in certain specified subjects, for instance, the elements of economics. But in any case they should be encouraged to consider every subject with one eye on the contemporary problems upon which that subject impinges. Those who are acquiring a particular scientific technique should also discuss the broad questions concerning the place of science in the modern world; those who study a modern language and literature should also examine the character of the national civilisation and its importance in the affairs of to-day; those who deal with the art of the past should consider it as the flower of a particular social organism, and thus bring out the eternal problems of all art, which are then to be related to contemporary artistic output. Thus by a rational ordering of studies and a judicious emphasis on values we

should make students feel that the purpose of learning is indeed the good life.

A re-orientation of academic study with the broad purpose of putting the individual as quickly as possible into vital relationship with his environment will necessarily assist in promoting what is in a sense the more limited aim of producing good citizens in a particular type of society. But it will be desirable in addition to give training designed more specifically to fit the individual for citizenship in a free community. We must first of all agree on the main qualities required in the citizens of such a community. We are for the moment confining our attention to those individuals whose intellectual equipment fits them to receive advanced education and to take an effective part in political life. It is assumed, of course, that they have a firm belief in the basic principles of a free society. Then we must demand of them certain qualities of mind: they must be able to think logically, to judge impartially, and to discuss social questions without passion or prejudice; they must also be willing to master the kind of knowledge that is especially relevant to public affairs. In addition, they should have a developed sense of their responsibility for the direction of social effort, and a readiness to give time and trouble to work of public value. Further, their moral outlook must be such that they will exhibit in themselves and demand in others that courage and integrity which are essential to the sound conduct of public policy.

As soon as we embark on the task of giving a practical training designed to develop such qualities as these, we are bound to be confronted by problems that can be solved only after much thought and experiment. What, for instance, are the best methods of encouraging clear and dispassionate thinking on public affairs? What minimum of knowledge related to social problems is it desirable for the intelligent citizen to possess? Is the direct study of politics to be encouraged in schools? Should the elements of social science be made a regular part of advanced secondary education? Of what value is the discussion of current events in schools? How can such subjects as history and geography, forming part of the normal curriculum, be best treated so as to throw light on the problems of contemporary society? How can the corporate life of school and university be made to assist the development of the qualities needed for citizenship? Fortunately such matters are now receiving the expert attention they deserve. They are being made the subject of investigation by the recently formed Association for Education in Citizenship.<sup>1</sup> This body is collecting information about what is already being done in educational institutions in the way of training for citizenship, and it is publishing the results of the enquiries so that teachers and others may be able to benefit by the suggestions made and the experience gained.

<sup>1</sup> Particulars may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Eva M. Hubback, Morley College, Westminster Bridge Road, London, S.E. 1.

### § 3 *Means of Expediting the Necessary Educational Reforms*

The re-orientation of advanced education could be undertaken, of course, by the appropriate school and university authorities on their own initiative. It seems likely, however, that a special stimulus will have to be applied from outside if the change is to be brought about soon enough. The work of the upper forms of secondary schools is dominated by the requirements of the universities, and the universities are so deeply embedded in their various ruts that nothing but a considerable jolt will make them change their direction. Moreover, in a practical world it is not possible to consider courses of study entirely from an abstract and theoretical point of view. We may tell an undergraduate that he will be a better man and a better citizen if he tries to become something more than a perfectly equipped technician in mathematics, or history, or engineering, or medicine, and if he widens the scope of his studies to include the relevant social problems. But, as things are, he may very well reply that, while he quite agrees with our suggestions, he has to think of the practical—or, to put it bluntly,—the commercial value of what he does. Will the kind of studies we recommend assist him to a living and a career? Will the profession of his choice welcome him if he allows the acquisition of specialised skill to be interfered with by the demands of education? If, therefore, we wish to infuse social purpose into our educational scheme,

I am afraid we shall have to think of utility as well as ideal aims.

Fortunately, it is possible to be practical without doing violence to essential principles. Various levers can be used. One is the examination system which has grown up as the means of selecting entrants to professional occupations. A considerable number of people of first-rate ability are admitted every year by examination into the Civil Service; and many more sit for the examinations without success. It would be a simple matter to modify the syllabuses of (particularly) the Executive and the Administrative Grades so as to ensure that all candidates shall show a grounding in the kind of knowledge we deem desirable in a citizen, particularly in one who is to take his place as a Government servant. Not only could subjects immediately related to political organisation be made compulsory, but history, science, languages, and so forth could be given a suitable bias. At present, the candidate for the highest grade can take papers in Economics or "Present Day", but he is usually specially "crammed" for these; his previous university studies may have had only the remotest connection with the principles of government, the carrying out of which is to be his life-work. A change in the requirements for Civil Service examinations would not only affect the entrants to the service; it would also tend to produce a general modification of university courses.

The Local Government Service could also be made both to provide a new career for graduates

and to influence the curricula of schools and universities in the direction we desire. The time is indeed ripe for a thorough overhaul of the recruitment of officers employed in local government. Hitherto they have been selected in a very unsatisfactory way; the standards of attainment have been uneven and there has been little attempt to secure the best type of candidate. The Departmental Committee appointed by the Minister of Health<sup>1</sup> has shown the need for a permanent central advisory committee to co-ordinate the work of the local authorities and to give effect to the principles laid down in the Report. The Committee recommends the holding of suitable competitive examinations for junior clerical officers. The minimum age for entry should be sixteen, and the minimum educational qualification the School Certificate. It is suggested that a certain proportion of officers should be recruited at the age of eighteen-nineteen from the advanced pupils of secondary schools. When once within the service, junior officers should undergo further training taking the form of preparation for an examination for promotion. The Committee also recommends that the larger authorities should recruit by examination a certain number of university graduates with non-technical qualifications. These suggestions provide the necessary framework for a scheme that would establish a further connection between

<sup>1</sup> Report to the Minister of Health by the Departmental Committee on Qualifications, Recruitment, Training and Promotion of Local Government Officers, 1934.

academic study biased towards social and political subjects and the practical business of government. The new examinations have yet to be devised. The opportunity can be taken to draw up such syllabuses as will encourage the right sort of general preliminary training at school and university and also secure that work of genuinely educational value is done during the period of training undergone by junior officers for promotion. The adoption of such a scheme would at the same time raise the standard of efficiency in local government services and open an important new vocational avenue for advanced secondary school pupils and university graduates. In the last few years there has been a great increase in the powers and duties of the local authorities, and hence also in their personnel. In the future, as more areas of corporate activity come under public control, there will be a corresponding growth in the number of posts available.

The Board of Education, without assuming autocratic powers hitherto unexercised, could do much by suggestion and direct regulation to bring about the desired re-orientation of education. This is so obvious that I need not labour it. The Board's influence can be more rapidly and immediately exerted on schools than on universities because the latter are autonomous bodies. But even the universities could be induced to make rapid changes if the Board demanded different qualifications in intending teachers. At present the non-professional training of teachers follows



for the most part the specialised lines favoured by the universities. New entrants to the profession leave their seats of learning with their heads filled with the technique of scholarship or scientific procedure, and with little or no understanding of how their particular specialism can be made to contribute to the real purposes of education. The whole question of the training of teachers, in fact, urgently needs re-examination. But that is a matter which we cannot go into here. It is enough to emphasise two points. First, it is of critical importance that we should secure teachers with the right outlook; and, secondly, since intending teachers form a very considerable proportion of university students any changes in their courses can be made to affect the university curriculum as a whole.

Pressure can also be exerted by the organised professions. Preparation for Medicine, Law and Engineering is wholly or partly undertaken by University Faculties, and the courses of study are more or less determined by the professional associations concerned. Any changes in the official view of what constitutes a good doctor, or lawyer, or engineer would naturally react on the teaching given. If, therefore, the professional bodies developed a livelier sense of civic responsibility, they could demand and obtain something more than technical competence in those who are to become members. Unfortunately, at present these bodies tend to be mainly concerned with safeguarding their sectional interests and traditional

rights. It is not surprising, therefore, that the student of Medicine, Law, Engineering, or Architecture generally confines himself to the pursuit of technical skill. So much has to be learned in the years of apprenticeship that, without definite encouragement, he can hardly be expected to depart very far from what seem to be the essentially practical lines. And yet it remains true that a doctor whose knowledge and interest do not extend to the psychological conditions of individual and communal welfare, or an engineer who has not considered the economic results and the social implications of his work, or a lawyer who regards his profession as a means of earning fees rather than as an important branch of social science, or an architect who has given no thought and study to the big questions of housing and town-planning, is unable to make his proper contribution to the life of the community. As soon as the professions realise to the full their social responsibility, they will see to it that the education of entrants is broadened and related to the totality of human needs.

It must be remembered, also, that much educational work is being done by professional bodies unconnected with universities. The various authorities representing Banking, Insurance, Accountancy, Surveying, and Secretarial work, for instance, have instituted their own examinations for the conferring of professional qualifications. In some cases the kind of knowledge required is purely technical; in others it is of a more general

character. It would obviously be an easy matter to revise the syllabuses so that students should be required to consider their professional work in its social bearings. We cannot expect so much perhaps from students who are at work all day as from those who are following a university course, but something could certainly be done. The important thing is that as many people as possible should acquire the right point of view and consider their daily work as a contribution to the sum of social welfare. The effects of such a change of attitude would extend beyond the educational work of the professions concerned to the schools and universities.

#### § 4 *Propaganda in Defence of Freedom*

The upholder of freedom is distinguished from the political authoritarians in that, just because he allows full play to reason, he reduces the area covered by dogma to a minimum. When they put forward as ultimate truths that a particular race is marked out by destiny to be in the van of progress, that another race is the pest of civilisation, that the proletariat are the only fit occupants for the seats of the mighty, that nations find their salvation in war, he objects on the ground that such doctrines are either demonstrable falsehoods or matters of argument. But, although he is unwilling to abandon the rational standpoint for a cloudy mysticism, his creed is not merely negative or sceptical. While he believes that free discussion should be carried to its furthest limits, there comes

a point at which, even for him, dogma must enter. The value of freedom is itself, I take it, a matter of dogma. We can find many excellent supporting reasons no doubt, but ultimately we either believe intuitively that freedom is good or we do not. Similarly, there are certain fundamental principles underlying the organisation of a free society which are not susceptible of argument. We lay it down, for instance, that, to the limits of individual capacity, personal responsibility for, and participation in, public affairs are necessary and valuable; that the supremacy of law should be beyond challenge; that change should be effected by persuasion rather than by force. Anyone who will not accept these principles is moving in a world of thought which is outside our own, and we must be content to leave him there.

Hence, when we recommend the cause of freedom to the intelligent public on rational grounds, we need not attempt to disguise the limited but definite basis of dogma in our creed. In making our appeal to the very young and to the many who are adult in years but not in mind, dogma must, of course, assume a larger place. Many teachers will wish to carry training for citizenship into the primary schools. Good work can be done with the youngest children, even if it is only by quickening the social sense in such matters as the disposal of litter and the proper treatment of public property. Clearly, at this stage the method must be direct indoctrination rather than rational argument. There must be similar

treatment, too, in the case of adult citizens of low mental capacity. In a political system depending ultimately on majorities, they must obviously not be left out of any educational scheme. They must, on the one hand, be shielded from the kind of wanton mass-suggestion that would pervert them from the liberal faith, and on the other hand they must be indoctrinated with the articles of that faith.

In other words, since the creed of liberty contains its element of dogma, and since in any case the mass of mankind are only to a limited extent amenable to the power of reason, we cannot afford to neglect the use of propaganda. Unfortunately, propaganda has acquired such sinister associations that it is necessarily viewed with suspicion or worse by the believer in freedom of thought. But we must remember that it is not inherently evil. After all, any educational process intended to embrace the public as a whole must consist partly in bringing intellectual conviction to the few, and partly in inducing a non-rational acceptance in the many. In campaigns to reduce the number of road accidents or to prevent the disfigurement of the countryside, we rely as much on the force of simple repetition as on logical argument. And no one condemns this kind of appeal as out of place in a free country. What we rightly object to is, first, the unscrupulous use of propaganda in giving the appearance of unchallengeable dogma to ideas which belong to the realm of logical proof; and, secondly, the creation of a closed national

cultural system from which intellectual forces inimical to the dominant political philosophy are excluded. But so long as we keep to the few basic principles of a free society, there is a due place for propaganda in an educational movement, even if that movement is controlled by the State itself.

§ 5 *Can we Create a "Party" in Support of  
Free Institutions?*

I come finally to a suggestion which I feel is extremely important, although I realise that it involves very great practical difficulties. I put it forward in the hope that it may provoke discussion which will tend to show that these difficulties are not insuperable. My scheme arises out of a consideration of the Party and its supporting youth organisations in the authoritarian states. As I have already said, this is a phenomenon to which the defenders of liberty cannot remain indifferent; nor can they avoid being impressed by the value of such an organisation in giving drive to social action. The Party canalises enthusiasm and energy, and provides the training-ground for leadership.

Obviously, the free communities would derive enormous advantage from the possession of an analogous body,—a body in which the diffused educational activity could find a focus, and through which a sane and progressive public opinion could be fostered. We need an organisation in which intelligent, public-spirited people of all classes can come together to think and work for social welfare on the lines of a humanist programme

associated with the ideal of liberty. The idea has already been mooted by Mr. H. G. Wells in his plan for an Open Conspiracy, but as practical politicians regard Mr. Wells as a Utopian dreamer, and the young intelligentsia inspired by D. H. Lawrence look upon him as a back-number, his proposals have not been given the serious consideration they deserve. That some movement of the kind is urgently necessary there can be no doubt. Whatever views we may have about Mr. Wells's visions of ultimate world organisation, we must surely agree that there is no tolerable future for our civilisation unless we can devise methods for enabling those of intellectual competence and moral integrity to take charge.

In bringing the creation of a society supporting free institutions within the field of practical politics, we should first of all have to define the relationship of such a body to existing political parties. It would not seek to supersede them. Eschewing a dogmatic creed such as Fascism and Communism, and pledged to the scientific examination of political and social problems, it would cut across conventional party divisions. It would wish to include all progressively minded people who are sufficiently "central" in outlook to make co-operation possible: it would necessarily exclude those who are unwilling to move out of the last ditch of nineteenth-century Toryism and those who want to act by means of violent revolution. It would provide a place for the large number of men and women who cannot accommodate themselves to the limits of any

existing political party, and who therefore stand aside from active public service or attach themselves only to non-party organisations which do not influence the main course of national policy. It would not attempt to do the kind of electioneering work with which the ordinary parties are primarily concerned. It would therefore be indifferent to mere numbers. It would admit to membership only those of proved ability who were genuinely anxious to give time and trouble to public questions. ~

It would not be easy, of course, for such a society to keep outside the ambit of the ordinary parties and at the same time work for a definite and vigorous programme; it is indeed only on the assumption that the members were all of superior intellectual capacity that it would be possible. Since the charge of impracticability is such an easy one, it is worth while to note the signs already appearing that the idea of political organisation apart from "party politics" is taking root. There is now in existence, for instance, the Federation of Progressive Societies and Individuals, which aims at bringing together all those elements in the community capable of co-operating in a broad humanistic policy leading to the control of world affairs on rational lines. Its constituent Groups deal with Peace, Politics and Economics, Education, Sex Reform, Law Reform and Civil Liberties, Town and Country Planning. Any individuals or societies that can accept the very wide progressive platform are eligible for membership. In the student-world a new society



has just come into being called the Democratic Front; its secretary is Mr. B. W. Stockwell of Fitzwilliam House, Cambridge, and it has distinguished support. In its manifesto I observe the following passage:—

“The Democratic Front is not a political party. It is open to those who wish to work for reform, and for their own political programmes, by democratic methods. Members will retain their loyalty to their parties. The Democratic Front is not concerned to form decisions on party issues. But it is actively concerned to remind partisans that all political questions can be validly and effectively decided only by the methods of reason.”

I quote these two examples as being significant of the tendency amongst intelligent people to take their stand together on ground outside the area of orthodox party dogma.

The first aim of the suggested association would be the study and discussion of social and political problems. As we are assuming that the intellectual level of the members would be a high one, this in itself would be a most valuable part of the programme. The society could plot social trends, foresee critical developments, and prepare the ground for practical schemes to meet eventual needs. One of our greatest dangers to-day is the lag between events and policy. In the last few years, for instance, we have witnessed a big movement of industry from the North and the Midlands to the South of England. This has involved an enormous expansion of the London urban area,

and brings in its train all sorts of problems concerning housing, the public services, the preservation of open spaces, and the reorganisation of Metropolitan Government. But this great transformation has come about before there has been any real public awareness of what has been going on, much less any organised effort to meet the situation. The only practically effective thought that has been given to it is the kind which finds its outlet in opportunist electioneering programmes. Again, we are shortly about to reach the maximum population in Great Britain; in a few years we shall witness a gradual decline, and shall be confronted with the consequential problems in social and industrial life. Is any systematic effort being made to estimate what the effects of a diminishing population will be and to provide plans in advance to cope with the situation? A society such as I have suggested, including as it would specialists in the relevant fields of knowledge, could be doing this kind of work and thus save us from the ill-informed and hastily improvised schemes which are the bane of public policy. In this way, apart from any other functions the society might have, it would be a most valuable organ of opinion. It would speak with an authority denied to the mass-movements relying on numbers rather than quality of membership. It could use its authority to approach the government of the day and to appeal to the general public through the Press and Broadcasting. And it would always be able to put national interests before political expediency.

But the society would need to have a second aim in action. The idealism that we want to enlist in the service of a free community demands something to *do*. This demand could be satisfied to a limited extent by the preparation of reports and schemes of the kind I have indicated. But something more would have to be offered. I imagine the members of the society taking a special interest in the affairs of their town or district and actively assisting local effort. In areas where particularly difficult problems arose they would set themselves to find solutions and take the lead in putting them into practice. They would be in the forefront in carrying out such schemes as those for putting unemployed to work at providing social amenities in derelict areas. As many of the members of the organisation would be professionally qualified as architects, engineers, and so on, they could give practical voluntary assistance in the drawing up of plans and the general direction of work. Some members would naturally find scope for their activity in serving on local councils: with the increasing complexity of the routine of government, the work of the local authorities acquires growing importance, and it is all the more necessary that it should be done well. Besides the social work already open to members of our society, other and perhaps more important tasks would arise when the organisation had properly established itself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> If such a revision of the franchise were made as is suggested in Chapter IV, pp. 122-3, membership of the society would carry an extra vote.

Here again I may mention that the beginnings of organised action for social good have already been made. Such bodies as the National Council for Social Service, the League of Nations Union, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association are in their various ways carrying out educational and practical work on non-party lines. A very important contribution is also made by the B.B.C. through its provision of a forum of discussion. Wireless talks give those who are interested the most expert knowledge and opinion on the main social topics; surveys of particular problems such as slum-clearance are undertaken; new developments are foreseen and the public mind is prepared for them. In this way thought and action are stimulated perhaps more effectively than by any other means. What is needed is that all this dispersed activity should be developed and concentrated in a body having a selected personnel and an inclusive aim.

How could such an association be brought into existence? Obviously it could not bear the same relation to the democratic state as does the Party to the totalitarian state. It is necessary that it should be an independent body, free from any suspicion that it leans towards a purely sectional or class creed. The initiative in forming it might be taken by a council representing the universities, the public education authorities, the learned societies, the organised professions, and bodies such as the League of Nations Union and the

National Council for Social Service, which seek worthy objects of national or international scope. This council would decide the qualifications for membership, settle the general lines of policy, and draw up a scheme of organisation. I assume that groups would be formed in local areas to be linked up in a national organisation with a central council exercising such general directive authority as proved to be necessary. As soon as the society demonstrated its genuinely non-party character and its practical value, I see no reason, as I have already suggested, why the State should not take official notice of it and even make use of it in much the same way as it now uses local authorities.

Once in being, the society would have to take measures to secure perpetual recruitment. Special attention would have to be given to the preparation of young candidates for admission. This would involve the creation of a special student-movement in the universities and a similar organisation in the senior forms of schools of secondary grade. At this point an essential link would be forged between the educational system and the political life of the country. In every educational institution of suitable character there would be a group of pupils undertaking special courses of voluntary study and helping in practical social activities, in order to qualify for admission to the society at a specified age; and this group would be regarded as the most important element in the life of the institution. To become a member of the group would be a coveted honour, for it would be clearly

understood that the numerical strength of the group was of no importance; only young people of suitable character and ability would be eligible, and of those who secured admission to this probationary organisation not all could hope to secure membership of the adult body.

A few years ago it would have been easy to dismiss such a plan for a *corps d'élite* as chimerical. After recent political developments abroad it is not so easy to do so. We cannot, in fact, put it aside as impracticable without being willing to admit that, while men will answer the bugles of an all-powerful leader summoning them to discipline and blind obedience, they will remain deaf to the call of reason and liberty.

## CHAPTER VI

### FREEDOM AND ECONOMIC ORGANISATION

#### § I *The Meaning of "Economic Freedom"*

THE freedom that men have desired has appeared in a different guise at different periods. At one time they have struggled against religious tyranny, at another against political despotism, at another against restrictions on rational inquiry and discussion; and as one aspect of freedom has come into prominence, others have tended to recede into the background. In modern times a rather vague something known as "economic freedom" has assumed more and more importance as the goal of aspiration. That it did not earlier attract thought and effort is not surprising. It was not until science had put at man's disposal a tremendously increased productive power that he could become actively desirous of throwing off the chains of economic servitude. So long as the fruits of the earth were scarce and only to be won by the labour of human muscle, he acquiesced in the condition that by the sweat of his brow he should eat bread: the daily round of grinding toil for a small pittance was accepted because it seemed the natural order of things. But when the machines began to provide the necessities and even the luxuries of life in

a hitherto undreamt-of abundance, a new vista was opened to human imagination. The work-people who had so long worn their shackles with little complaint now ceased to regard unremitting toil and restriction of means as their inevitable lot. They looked forward to the time when the new-found wealth of the world might be shared for the benefit of all. Their aspirations for freedom of thought and equality in political rights were already being realised. It was natural, therefore, that the attempt should be made to carry ideals of freedom from the political into the economic field. In Socialist schemes, particularly, a great extension of liberty was promised to those who had previously been in bondage to economic necessity; but even those who clung to individualist theory hoped to reach, by a different route, a goal to which they gave the same name. Post-war trade disorganisation and the resulting widespread distress have supplied additional impetus to the movement. The general realisation of the absurdity that individual want should exist in a world of immense actual and potential resources has put the demand for "economic freedom" in the forefront of all progressive political programmes.

In turning from the political aspect of freedom to the economic, we must bear in mind the intimate connection between political policy and economic policy in the modern State. The Marxist maintains of course, that the two are identical. I do not accept this position. I do not believe that economic conditions are the sole determinant of social and



political development. The State has a purpose transcending economic organisation. It exists to secure not only the means of livelihood but a way of life. The political form which gives expression to the ideals which a people thinks worth while therefore comes first. The economic structure shapes itself in relation to the controlling idea. Thus in sketching a practical scheme of political reform embodying the ideal of liberty, I have deliberately considered it independently of any doctrinaire economic theory. The principle of freedom being once accepted as fundamental to the social order, it becomes necessary to test any new economic policy in relation to that principle.

Now it is a remarkable fact that economic reformers of the most diverse outlook all claim to seek something which they call economic liberty. It is also a suspicious fact. The reformist Socialist tells us that whereas civil liberty is of very great value, the economic structure of society is of paramount importance for the development of personality. The Communist looks with visionary longing to the Utopian freedom of the classless society. The Fascist, too, would create a world in which the banishment of cramping poverty may give the necessary condition of freedom. Again, Sir Ernest Benn, who glories in his reactionary Victorianism, and has equal detestation for Socialist and Fascist, devotes himself utterly to the cause of economic freedom. Needless to say, the roads to this nominally common goal pursue very different directions. The Communist

regards the abolition of private property as the essential step to freedom. In Sir Ernest Benn's creed the individual possession of a reasonable amount of property is equally vital. The Fascist approves of private property so long as it is used as he says it ought to be. Sir Ernest Benn would do away with all State interference in business; otherwise, for him it is mockery to talk of freedom. The Communist is equally convinced that, unless State control is made complete, so-called freedom is a farce; he maintains that even in the present "transitional" stage of despotism in Russia there is more real freedom than elsewhere, since the admitted tyranny affects the few rather than the many. The Fascist opposes the State-system of the Communist; but only to substitute his own form of regimentation. And all in the blessed name of economic liberty.

It is evident that when people holding such conflicting views and advocating such different methods unite in praising "economic freedom", they are not really praising the same thing. The confusion arises from the looseness of the term used. What is called "economic freedom" includes a number of ideas of markedly different tendency, each of which can be made the basis of a political programme to the exclusion of the others. The worker sees one aspect of the matter; the entrepreneur another; the citizen is affected in one way as producer and in another as consumer. The ordinary member of the working population desires to be able to choose his occupation and his employer,

and to be able to move freely from one job to another; he objects to artificial barriers of class or education. He may wish to have a voice in the management of the concern in which he works; that is, he may demand the application of the democratic principle to industry. On the other hand, the owner of a business naturally wants to employ his capital as he chooses and to run his concern in the way that seems best to him. He is anxious to avoid unwarrantable interference on the part of his workpeople, and he resents restrictions on the free exchange of goods imposed by governments or other agencies. In other words, he would like to get as near as modern circumstances will permit to the old condition of Free Trade. Again, every working-citizen, whether employer or employed, naturally desires a position in which he will be free from worry about bread and butter,—in which he is certain of having work to do at a rate of remuneration that will guarantee him adequate material comfort and cultural opportunity. In fact, he wants his livelihood and his standard of life to be as secure as possible in an imperfect world. But men and women are not only producers; they are also consumers. As consumers they like to be able to choose what kinds of goods they will have at the hands of those who make and supply them, and to be unrestricted in the amounts they can buy. The rationing of goods introduced in war-time or other circumstances of economic stress is felt as a very serious infringement of liberty.

Now in any given society, some of these factors making for "economic liberty" may be present, but not others; and of those which are present not all may receive equal stress. It is easy to imagine, for instance, a community in which all the workers are secure in their employment and in a high standard of living and are yet without the right to choose their occupation or their place of work. Thus when those who are planning the reform or the destruction of the capitalist order tell us that their aim is to bring us economic freedom, we have to bear in mind that what they really intend is to establish one or more particular kinds of freedom. They may be seeking, for instance, to give the workers increased wages, leisure, and educational facilities, or to give everybody security of employment, or to put the control of industry in the hands of masses; at the same time, however, they will be ready to infringe other kinds of liberty. Similarly, those whose desire is to preserve the present system or even to revert to the *laissez-faire* economy are concerned to establish the unrestrained activity of the entrepreneur, the security of savings and investment, and the right of the consumer to satisfy his tastes and preferences; they may also, of course, hope that other sorts of freedom may come by the way. But it is clear that whatever form economic reorganisation takes, it will result in a redistribution of freedom or a change in its quality, but not necessarily in its positive increase.

In an ideal system the various factors I have enumerated would be harmonised in the interests

of all. In a practical system one or more of them must receive special emphasis according to the needs of the time. This means that we must make up our minds as to what, in present circumstances, is the relative importance of the various sorts of freedom. Having decided which of them our economic order should have for its primary objective, we must try to arrange matters so that the others are not unduly neglected.

### § 2 *Economic Freedom in the Capitalist Order*

At this point it would be well to consider the extent to which economic freedom is present in the capitalist democracy of to-day. We shall note, of course, the shift of emphasis on the various forms of freedom that has occurred during the transition from *laissez-faire* economics to the present compromise between individualism and collectivism. With regard to the choice of occupation, the individual has undoubtedly greater freedom to-day than when the barriers of class were far more formidable, and when education was the privilege of the few. Within the limits of the market, he can enter most trades or professions, if he has the necessary ability. Considerations of class still operate in certain cases, of course,—for instance, in the selection of members of the diplomatic service; and no one who lacks the backing of family resources can very well become a doctor or a lawyer. Again, the professional organisation of modern times has effectively closed the door to the unqualified practitioner. But when all reservations have been

made, we must allow that increased educational opportunity has produced greater freedom in the choice of a career and increased scope for individual talent. And it is worth mentioning that the individual retains the negative right of refusing to accept work he dislikes.

In the matter of working conditions, trade union action and State regulation have made the life of the worker in factory and shop much easier than in earlier days. It may be said that the independence of the old skilled craftsman has been lost in the unvarying routine of factory repetition-work; but, on the other side, we must note that the reduction in working-hours has given increased scope for leisure-interests, and technical progress has eliminated from many trades the excessive physical strain which formerly ruined the health of those employed in them. The general attitude of employers towards their staff has become far more human, and the exercise of merely arbitrary authority is less conspicuous. The principle of consultation between employers and employed has been gradually extended, so that in many businesses the ordinary operative can feel that he is not altogether without influence in matters of policy.

Naturally, in proportion as rights and privileges have been conceded to the work-people, the originally despotic power of the owners has been limited. In economic organisation the movement has long been away from the freedom of crude competition to regulation by the State. Since the War the pace of that movement has been greatly

accelerated. Never has the entrepreneur been so hedged about with restrictions of all kinds as he is to-day. Whole industries are subject to legislative orders imposing compulsory amalgamations, marketing-schemes, quotas, and so forth. We take it for granted that a considerable proportion of profits should be taken by the State to provide social services. If the industrialist is not directly affected by statutory interference, he may have his liberty of action restricted by the operations of a trade association. The owner of the small retail business finds it more and more difficult to resist the encroachments of the big stores and the multiple shops. In short, in a system which is still nominally individualist, the freedom of the owner of capital is now restricted to an extent that would have horrified nineteenth-century apostles of *laissez-faire*.

What of the individual considered as consumer? There is no doubt that in the capitalist system to-day he has far greater freedom than ever before; and this in spite of the serious falling-off in international trade. Through the enormous advances in machine-production and the invention and manufacture of entirely new materials the general public is being provided with an unprecedented variety of commodities. In his search for a profit the manufacturer anticipates and assists the changes of fashion, creates new wants, and indeed offers every possible inducement to the consumer to increase his collection of material possessions. Competition has accelerated the reduction of costs

of manufacture with the result that what were formerly regarded as luxuries are now within the purchasing power of even the poorer classes. The complaint is made that the goods we are offered are becoming increasingly standardised; we have to accept the quality and design imposed on us by the mass-producing factory. So long, however, as sufficient variety is maintained in the standardised designs of a given product, and the general level of design is kept high, there need not be grounds for such a complaint. Moreover, it will always be possible for goods of individual quality and character to be obtained by those who are prepared to pay for them. Whatever its drawbacks, therefore, individualist enterprise has vastly increased the area of consumer's freedom.

The remaining aspect of economic freedom is that which is better called security. It is in this respect that the capitalist system is failing most conspicuously. Conditions of chronic insecurity have brought disaster to both employers and employed. In spite of the huge expansion of productive capacity the individual has no guarantee that he will be able to obtain his due share of the goods and services available. Apart from accumulated or inherited wealth, he can claim that share only through wages received for work done; and too often, through no fault of his own, there is no work for him to do. Unemployment or the threat of unemployment has deprived millions of people of the greater part of their liberty to order their daily lives as they might reasonably desire. Of



course, those who seek the overthrow of the present system have long urged that in a capitalist society the worker is always in this position of insecurity; he is always a "wage-slave" subject to the whims of his employer and the uncontrolled fluctuations of trade. Fundamentally, it seems to me, this charge amounts to little more than that there are certain economic necessities to which the individual must submit no matter in what form of society he lives. But its partial justification was admitted by the social reformers who provided Old Age Pensions, Workmen's Compensation, Health and Unemployment Insurance. If the financial and industrial machine had continued to work well enough to provide adequate employment, ameliorative legislation might have succeeded in eventually giving the worker a fair measure of security against the disastrous hazards of life. In the present situation the gains of earlier social reform are nullified. The crude fact is that a large section of the population has no source of income beyond the pittance allowed by the State to ward off starvation. Many of the people thus circumstanced have not only no certain livelihood now but no hope of better conditions in the future. To them anything hitherto done to provide security must seem the merest trifling; and to them the various political liberties guaranteed by law cease to have any great significance.

### § 3 *Freedom, Security, and Planning*

Our examination of present conditions in capitalist societies shows that what I have called security

is more urgently desired than any other form of economic liberty. Entrepreneurs and owners of capital may resent the rapidly growing encroachment of the State in areas formerly controlled by private business; workers may resist the attacks made by rationalisation on workshop rules; but the community as a whole would view with equanimity far greater restriction of private enterprise and interference with trade customs if there were a reasonable prospect of ensuring a place for everyone in the economic scheme. What matters above all else now is the maintenance of the standard of life through the provision of employment.

In such a situation it is natural that the benefits alleged to be obtainable by means of what is called a planned economy should have very great attraction. Since the self-regulating mechanism of the traditional competitive system seems to have broken down, it is tempting to believe that a central control designed to carry out a predetermined programme of production would effect a more satisfactory distribution both of work and of the products of work than is the case to-day. The idea of State-planning has become, indeed, the most powerful influence in economic policy throughout the world. We in England have already gone a good way towards a regulated system, and it may be that we shall go very much further in the future. But before we proceed too far it would be well to pause to consider what sacrifices of other forms of liberty may have to be made on the altar of security, and whether we are ready to make them.

If we are prepared to carry economic planning to its logical extreme, we are confronted with the alternatives of the Communist State and the Fascist (Corporative) State. These two forms of economic structure are usually presented as antithetical; but, in spite of their obvious points of difference, they exhibit an essential likeness. The basic characteristic of both is regimentation by means of a central authority. And this common feature is of far more practical importance than the difference in the seat of power. That this is so is indicated by the tendency now clearly observable for Communism and Fascism to merge into one another through various hybrid forms. (It is not without significance, moreover, that Mussolini began as a Socialist; and his English would-be imitator was also once to be found in the same camp.) The present German ruling partly incorporates the term "Socialist" in its official designation, and there are definitely socialistic elements in its predominantly Fascist policy. In France there has grown up a "Fascism of the Left"; in 1933 a schism in the Socialist party produced the Neo-Socialist group which abandoned Marxism, and, with the slogan "Order, Authority, Nation", adopted a programme of industrial reorganisation on the lines of the Italian Corporations. The English Trades Union Congress of 1934 considered a plan for the "socialisation" of the iron and steel industry which comes very near to the kind of capitalist monopoly favoured in the other camp. The proposal was that the industry should be

organised as a public corporation, and, subject to the over-riding authority of the State, it should be granted the maximum of self-government. The only feature betokening the Labour-Socialist origin of the scheme seemed to be the insistence on the due recognition of the trade unions and the interests of the workers by hand and brain. What the extremists want, therefore, whether they belong nominally to the Left or the Right is a more or less rigid organisation of industry under an all-powerful central authority.

Now organisation necessarily implies compulsion and the loss of liberty somewhere; and the more rigid the organisation, the greater will that loss be. Central control calls for the subordination of the individual to the whole. The incidence and the extent of the compulsion exerted will vary, of course, according to the nature of the economy. Thus in the Fascist State, trade unions are suppressed and the industrialists retain limited freedom; whereas in the Communist State the capitalists are extinguished and the workers assume control. But in both cases individual effort and initiative have to be harnessed to a scheme imposed from above. At present the Communist plan (as seen in Russia) is more rigid than the Fascist (as seen in Italy), but the Corporative System has yet to be fully demonstrated in practice, and there is no reason to suppose that it will eventually be any less coercive and inclusive than its rival.

For the purpose of discussion, therefore, we may drop the terms Communist State and Corporative

State and consider the planned system in general; that is, the economic order in which a central authority decides the kinds and the quantities of the things to be produced, and assumes responsibility for carrying out the programme decided upon. The effect on individual freedom will be very much the same whatever form the central controlling authority takes and whatever class it represents. Even if we assume that State regimentation is able to give the citizen security of work and income, there can be no doubt that, in exchange for that security, he will have to yield up other liberties that are now his. It may be that he will regard those liberties as well lost for such a boon. The danger is that in his exultation at compassing a longed for social revolution he will not notice that they are lost; nor will he realise that precious extra-economic liberties have disappeared as well.

Is the wholesale surrender of freedom that we see in Russia and the Fascist states a necessary condition of a fully planned economy? Mr. Walter Lippmann has no hesitation in saying that it is.<sup>1</sup> "The military pattern is the basic pattern of any directed social order. If a multitude of people is to act according to a definite plan, it must be militarised. That is to say: centralised decision must replace distributed decisions. There must be a hierarchy of officers, or, if you like, officials, and a rank and file of privates. The officers must command. The privates must obey. In place of

<sup>1</sup> Walter Lippmann: *The Method of Freedom*, 1934, pp. 40-41.

argument, persuasion, bargaining, and compromise among individuals there must be orders and disciplined acceptance of those orders. It is inconceivable that among multitudes the free choice of individuals could be brought into agreement upon a comprehensive plan, or that a multitude of individuals who were free to co-operate or to stand apart could voluntarily carry out a national plan. If the social order is to be planned, it has to be directed as it is in war-time, and the liberty of private transactions has to give way to regimentation."

It would be well to consider this matter in some detail. Let us assume that a central authority has been invested with power by the Government to draw up a programme of production for a period of years and to see that it is carried out. Let us assume, further, that the ultimate purpose of the programme is to provide employment for the maximum number of people. It is clear that in order to carry out the plan some industries will have to be expanded, some contracted, some closed down entirely, and some new ones perhaps brought into being. All this will necessarily involve changes in the distribution of labour, the extent and seriousness of the changes depending on the nature of the plan. How will such changes be effected? Up to a point economic inducements, such as the offer of higher remuneration for specific classes of work, might suffice; but a programme providing for really drastic reorganisation could not in the long run be carried out without resort to compulsion. One of the obvious matters that would

have to receive attention in any central plan for the industrial development of Great Britain would be the coal industry. The situation in which thousands of coal-miners are idle with no prospect of ever again finding work in their trade would have to be ended at once; that is to say, redundant miners would have to be transferred compulsorily and as quickly as possible to new areas and new industries. It may be said that such action would be entirely beneficial to the unemployed miners and should have been taken long ago. That may be so; but we must not forget that in such circumstances the individual miner would cease to have the freedom he now has to stay in his native place or to seek another job at his own choice. True, in conditions of chronic unemployment such freedom is not worth much. But workers in other industries where there was plenty of employment at a given moment would also be ordered from place to place, if special adjustments had to be made. It may be urged, again, that in our present system a man is often compelled to move from one place to another according to where jobs are to be found. But while he is now free to refuse a particular job for personal reasons, he would not be similarly free in a planned order.

Under the new conditions, moreover, the individual would not have his present freedom of entry into trades and professions. If the programme required the reduction in the size of a certain industry, it would be necessary to limit the number of entrants for a given period. On the other hand, when it

was necessary to expand a particular industry, no trade union or other restrictions would be allowed to interfere with the rapid recruitment and training of new workers. If it were found that the universities were preparing too many physicists or too few biologists to meet social needs, undergraduates would find the doors closed in one direction and opened in another. It is not irrelevant here to refer to the policy of National Socialist Germany, since what is being done there with regard to employment is at least partly the result of economic considerations. In order to prevent the overcrowding of the labour market with university-trained men and women, the entries to the universities are now limited to a fixed number per year. Again, as it had been decided by authority that it is desirable for older unemployed workers to be first served, it was decreed (30th August, 1934) that all young men and women under twenty-five years of age—with certain exceptions—should yield their posts to older unemployed men.

The reorganisation of the methods of distribution would also have important effects. The planning authorities might (like the Nazi Party) favour the small retail business and thus legislate to keep it in being; in which case they would have to interfere with the present rights of distributive agencies to organise themselves into big corporations controlling departmental stores and multiple shops. Most probably, however, they would encourage the rapid development of the large retail business



operating over a wide area, and the result would be the virtual elimination of the small man in many sections of retail trade.

Central control would naturally involve curtailment of the rights and privileges at present enjoyed by trade and professional associations. In carrying out their task of dove-tailing industries into a general scheme and spreading work to the best advantage, the planners could not submit to trade union rules concerning, for instance, hours of work and technical methods; nor could they tolerate arrangements entered into by employers' associations for price-fixing (if we suppose the continuance of the price-mechanism), for the limitation of output, and for the allocation of production to particular firms. Associations of employers and of employed might remain in being, but much of their power to secure their particular sectional interests would disappear.

In a controlled economy, the consumer would certainly not be able to get his own way to the same extent as now. He would have to adapt his desires and requirements to the necessities of the plan. For it is to be remembered that the primary object of the plan would not be to give the public what it wanted in the way of goods but to distribute incomes by providing employment. Thus, it might be decided that, in the general economic interests of this country, all the oil required should be manufactured from coal. All users of fuel-oils and lubricants would then have to buy the national products even if they were more expensive and

less satisfactory than foreign oils. If planning were carried to its limit, the consumer would be rationed in respect of the main articles of consumption, as in Russia from the commencement of the Five Year Plan. If, on the other hand, the price-mechanism were retained, prices would be manipulated in such a way as to induce him to buy those things of which there was a plentiful supply and to abstain from those which were scarce. And plenty and scarcity would be determined less by his likes and dislikes than by the need of the planners to keep this industry going, to start that one, or to bring about the easy demise of a third. So long as anything like an open market was retained, the consumer would not be compelled to have a given quantity of this or that (as under the rationing system demanded by strict Communism), but his freedom would be severely cramped.

The general conclusion at which we arrive, therefore, is this. It is possible that planning would provide security—not necessarily at the present level of well-being; but it would certainly cause a contraction of liberty, the contraction being proportionate to the comprehensiveness of the plan. The individual would suffer both as producer and as consumer. It is to be regretted that advocates of the strictly planned economy are not as frank as they might be in putting this aspect of their case before the public,

#### § 4 *The Next Step*

It appears that the path of the defender of freedom becomes more uncertain and more difficult to pursue as we emerge from the political area into the economic field. What is desired is not a simple thing but a complex in which the balance of factors depends largely on individual circumstances and preferences. Those who value security of employment and income above the freedom to work how, when, and where they like, to save money and use it as they please, and to have full choice of purchaseable goods will look towards some form of collectivist economy in which it is believed conditions of security can be realised. Those, however, who are attracted less by security than by opportunity and scope for individual enterprise will be anxious to retain the essential features of the present system. The student concerned merely with the abstract question of liberty will foresee both gains and losses whatever course we adopt: his difficulty will be to estimate what the eventual position under a new system will be when the gains and losses have made themselves felt.

While there is justification for theoretical scepticism concerning the prospects of liberty, however, our practical course is determined in its general direction by the logic of facts. The immediate problem, from which we cannot escape, is that a world situation has been allowed to develop in which the paramount concern of society must be to secure the certain and equitable distribution

of incomes. Even those who prize most highly the opportunity for individual choice and initiative must in common humanity be prepared to sacrifice some of the freedoms they would desire in order that the proper means of livelihood may be guaranteed to all.

How can this end be achieved? A return to *laissez-faire* is inconceivable at this time of day. Nobody is seriously prepared to advocate the total removal of the checks and controls now imposed by the State on industry. It is arguable that with the restoration of free competition the process of economic adjustment would eventually work itself out to a stable equilibrium; but this condition could not be reached without an amount of human suffering far too great to be contemplated. The prospect of salvation through the "sudden death" and "healthy bankruptcy" of industries ceases to have much appeal when we think in terms of human beings rather than of abstractions. We cannot go back; neither can we remain where we are. Our actions in dealing with the exceptional problems of post-war years have committed us to a policy of increasing governmental intervention in economic affairs. We have reached a point at which our system has become a patently opportunist compromise in which the virtues of both the individualist and the collectivist orders tend to disappear. We may hesitate to proceed to the position in which the State assumes direct responsibility for the working of the industrial machine. We must at least see to it that State supervision,

where it exists, is given a clear purpose and is efficiently exerted.

Coming social changes no less than our past actions make it certain that the part of the State in economic life will become increasingly important. A new phase in our industrial experience has opened. Hitherto trade expansion has been accompanied by a continuous growth of population: we have now entered on a period of stationary or diminishing population. In the past, the additional production of new industries could be absorbed by the increasing population without a corresponding interference with existing industries. To-day, as purchasing-power is directed to new products or new services, it tends to be markedly withdrawn from old ones. The coming of motor-transport, for instance, has hit the railways badly; in a time of rapidly growing population, the railways might have retained at any rate an undiminished share of passenger and goods transport, even although the new mode of transit provided greatly increased facilities. Thus to-day there arises localised unemployment brought about by special displacement of labour of a kind unknown in the nineteenth century. These conditions call for the development of a new technique for minimising the disturbances caused by the growth of fresh industries and the consequent decline of old ones; and this new technique must obviously involve a widened area of State assistance. The State must accept fuller responsibility for aiding the transfer of labour from dying industries to those which new demands or new inventions

have brought into being, and for enabling workers who are skilled in one trade to become skilled in another. In some way, too, special assistance will have to be given to the labour and the capital of moribund industries so that the death may be a slow one: perhaps the new and prosperous industries should be charged with part of the cost of maintaining those which are obsolescent. Whatever solutions are found of these and other problems, they must issue in the national co-ordination of industrial activity: in no other way can human interests be defended against the impact of disastrous economic forces.<sup>1</sup>

The only practical questions, therefore, are how far and at what pace we shall move in the direction of centralised control. Are we ready to go the whole way? Do we want to take ownership and economic initiative entirely out of private hands and vest it in an absolute State? Or do we want to retain private ownership while subjecting it to strict control by a State which assumes complete responsibility for economic planning? And, if we desire either of these things, do we regard any delay as an intolerable postponement of economic salvation?

These questions will be answered in the affirmative only by those to whom either Marx or Mussolini has brought the light of a new gospel. So long as we regard liberty as fundamental to the social

<sup>1</sup> For the substance of this paragraph I am indebted to Sir Josiah Stamp's paper on "The Need for a Technique of Economic Change", read to the Department of Industrial Co-operation at the meeting of the British Association, 1934.

order we shall turn away from any proposal to establish an absolute collectivism by revolutionary methods. In the first place, a rigidly planned system necessarily involves so much interference with the individual that it should be accepted only as a last resource; and in the second place, as I have already pointed out, in the turmoil resulting from a violent social upheaval, the rights of the individual would cease to be of any account. The rapid improvisation of a new economic system could not be carried out without coercion, and coercion that would extend through all departments of life. The inevitable dictatorship might start with the best intentions and proclaim its tenure of power to be merely temporary, but the risk of a permanent despotism is too great to be willingly faced.

Even if we put aside the danger to liberty, practical wisdom should make us hesitate before plunging into a doctrinaire scheme of rigid State organisation. Such a course could not be justified unless it were certain that the new order would be successful. And only fanatics would regard it as certain. It is reasonable to doubt whether any board of official planners would be able to impose a thorough programme of reorganisation on such a complex industrial system as our own without causing dislocations as serious in their consequences as the evils intended to be cured. The precedents are hardly favourable. The Italian Corporative State is as yet little more than a paper scheme, and no conclusions can be drawn from it. Whatever the Russian Government may have done for

the political exaltation of the proletariat, it has not so far been conspicuously successful in getting the necessary goods produced. And it may be said that it is easier to plan in conditions of scarcity, when a ready market exists to take whatever manufacturers supply, than in conditions of abundance. Of course, certain allowances must be made. The Russians are engaged on the tremendous task of creating a huge industrial machine at the same time as they are bringing into being a new type of social structure; and perhaps administrative efficiency is not a characteristic of the Russian people; moreover, the full results of the efforts already made have still to come. But the fact remains that living conditions have been far better in England, France, or America, even during the worst years of the depression, than they are in Russia. No doubt, in a country wholly or largely independent of foreign supplies of food and raw material, intelligent planning reinforced by dictatorial authority could so organise production and distribution as to ensure that everyone received an equitable share of what was available. The probabilities are, however, that the interference with private initiative in home industry and the dislocation of international trade would cause a slackening of industrial and commercial effort and a considerable lowering of the standard of life. Thus the present regimentation of German economic life may be spreading employment, but it is doing so at the cost of reducing material welfare all round. In any case, Great Britain cannot attempt



what might be possible in the United States, in Russia, in France, in Italy, and even in Germany, for she could not for years to come make herself independent of external resources. The nexus of international trade in which she is involved is essential to her life. The complexity of her trade mechanism is such that the shock of a violent economic disturbance would have unpredictable and probably disastrous consequences.

For this country, therefore, the only course which is both practically sound and compatible with a reasonable measure of freedom is to proceed with such a modification of the capitalist order as will avoid catastrophic dislocations and yet secure effective general control of a system rooted in private initiative. In this way, instead of venturing into the unknown sea of doctrinaire experiment, we can use to the full our knowledge and experience and work under conditions with which we are familiar. In this way, too, the further interference with liberty rendered inevitable by the increase of centralised control can at least be made with circumspection and restraint. This is not to say that the present economic scheme, even in its main outlines, must remain fixed indefinitely. It may be that future problems will demand a fully collectivist solution, whatever sacrifices may be involved. But that solution is more likely to be a tolerable one if it is reached by a process of practical development than if it is applied to-day by fanatics in a hurry.

My purpose in this chapter has been to analyse the nature of economic freedom and to discover

the course of action most consistent with its maintenance. I have stated my conclusion that, before staking everything on revolution, we should attempt to work out the last possibilities of our existing system. I do not pretend to have any novel proposals of my own as to what form our efforts should take: a detailed plan of advance must be left to the economists and business experts whose province it is. All I can profitably do is to call attention to one or two problems of immediate importance and to record fertile suggestions already made.

In an earlier chapter I have dealt fully with the need to create a National Economic Council to which Parliament could delegate a great deal of specialised work which it now attempts to do itself. As soon as we accept the view that a transformation of the capitalist system must be deliberately carried out, it becomes obvious that such a council is needed not merely to relieve Parliament of its increasing burdens but to undertake the all-important task of mapping the main lines of policy over a period of years. I conceive this body as acting in no partisan spirit, but soberly and scientifically considering the facts as they are and the developments immediately possible from the existing situation; it would then settle such general principles as the relationship of the State to industry in the immediate future and the order in which the various items of reorganisation should be proceeded with. The council would not begin as a planning authority in the sense in which the

term is used by the advocates of a Socialist State. Its work would be co-ordinate effort, to lay down guiding principles for national industry and commerce, to foresee the difficulties lying ahead, and to provide a channel through which the best economic thought might be made effective in public policy. It would encourage new and promising experiments in business organisation, and it would intervene to prevent false moves and developments out of harmony with the main policy. The extent and nature of its functions would, of course, define themselves as the work proceeded.

Under the guidance of such an authority we might hope to see the growth of that "institutional self-discipline"<sup>1</sup> which Sir Arthur Salter regards as the essential factor in the successful transition from the old crudely competitive system to the order in which private enterprise is directed to public ends. With the major industries integrated into big units of production, with the extension of the principle of semi-public corporations as exhibited in the Central Electricity Board and the London Passenger Transport Board, with better organisation and fuller co-operation on the part of employers' associations, trade unions, Chambers of Commerce, professional and other bodies, the conditions would be favourable to the development of the vision that passes beyond sectional interests to the needs of society as a whole. If the wider outlook that already characterizes the bodies managing

<sup>1</sup> Sir Arthur Salter: *The Framework of an Ordered Society*, 1933.

the great public services were generally acquired by the business community, it would be possible to build up from within the system of private enterprise a form of control that would be far more satisfactory than an arbitrary State-imposed plan.

One of the most pressing tasks that would have to be undertaken by a National Economic Council would be a thorough investigation of the monetary problem. The system depending on price-mechanism cannot be permanently rehabilitated unless we find the right methods of circulating the counters enabling the goods which producers can provide in such abundance to be bought by the body of consumers who are only too ready to have them. In view of the widespread notion that the capitalist order has involved itself in difficulties from which it cannot extricate itself,—that it has, in fact, irretrievably broken down, we should not allow it to be forgotten that there is considerable expert support for the opinion that the problems of the trade cycle in general and the present depression in particular would be perfectly amenable to solution if we could properly adapt our internal currency system and our international financial arrangements to the special conditions of to-day; some would even go so far as to say that the present crisis of unemployment and so-called over-production is due entirely to monetary causes. The matter is, of course, highly technical and cannot be profitably discussed by the non-expert. It is only necessary to say here that it seems hardly worth while to

have a social revolution if a monetary revolution will serve the purpose equally well.<sup>1</sup>

Another urgent matter with which a National Economic Council would have to deal would be, as I have already suggested, to settle the part which the State should play in the new economy. Should the State confine itself to exercising generally benevolent supervision, or should it act more directly to secure the smooth working of the financial and industrial machine? On this point valuable suggestions have recently been made by Mr. Walter Lippmann. He shows that even in an economy retaining the essential principle of private enterprise, there are various ways in which the State can effectively intervene to assist desirable developments and prevent undesirable ones. He points out the vital defect of individualism "which is that the multitude of individual decisions is not sufficiently enlightened to keep the economy as a whole in working order. Regulation is essentially negative. In the main it merely forbids this or that. But it is not possible to prohibit by laws the cumulative errors which produce the cycles of boom and depression."<sup>2</sup> Yet it is from

<sup>1</sup> The Social Credit scheme proposed by Major Douglas is being widely canvassed, so that the public mind is becoming accustomed to the possibility of a purely monetary solution of our difficulties. Dr. Robert Eisler's plan put forward in his *Stable Money*, 1932, deserves far more attention than it has so far received. He claims for his scheme that it would achieve international stability of the exchanges as well as reasonable stability of the national and international price-level and give to the technical age what it needs if the individualist order of society is to survive, namely, a freely expansible currency with a stable purchase-power of the monetary unit.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Lippmann: *The Method of Freedom*, 1934, p. 48.

these cycles that the supreme danger arises. It follows that if individualist economic action is to continue, it becomes necessary "to create collective power, to mobilise collective resources, and to work out technical procedures by means of which the modern State can balance, equalise, neutralise, offset, correct the private judgments of masses of individuals." For the establishment of what he calls a Compensated Economy, Mr. Lippmann looks in the main to the development and extension of procedures already tested. Improved methods of Central Banking, for instance, in alliance with a new technique of monetary management would form a powerful means of controlling industrial activity. Again, the State is itself a great consumer, investor, borrower, and employer. It can learn so to plan its activities as to correct the disequilibrium due to private operations. It can promote public works when private industry is slack, and curtail public works, that is, reduce its demand for labour and materials, when business is good. Taxation is another instrument to hand: taxes can be raised or remitted in order to help business in general, to encourage or discourage this or that particular enterprise, to increase consumption or investment, and so on. Government could also operate compensatory mechanism through the transport companies, and the public utility societies, whose rates of charge are subject to statutory regulation. By a similar manipulation of tariffs and foreign credits the balancing process could be extended from domestic to international

trade. Mr. Lippmann makes clear how great and extensive is the directive power that could be wielded by the State even when private initiative remains the mainspring of the system. The effective use of this power demands the acquisition of a new social technique. But the technique is one that we have already begun to learn.

My remarks on the transformation of the capitalist order are intended to be merely suggestive and subsidiary to my main purpose, which is to clarify issues and decide what general policy is most consistent with the preservation of liberty. I must conclude by repeating that even a system of limited State control will necessarily involve a curtailment of the liberty which we at present enjoy. It is therefore most important that the implications of every new step should be carefully watched. Before a fresh piece of regimentation is introduced, its effect on personal choice and personal action should be closely scrutinised. Only by continuous criticism can we ensure that we shall attain a tolerable mean between individualist anarchy and collectivist despotism.

### § 5 *Freedom in the New Age of Leisure*

In the preceding pages I have considered the economic system primarily as an instrument for providing work; and this indeed must be the aspect of the matter most vividly present to our minds at the present time. But the final aim of economic effort is not merely to provide people with jobs; it is to secure their general well-being; and

well-being is dependent not only upon employment but upon leisure. The possession of leisure implies economic freedom of a very real kind. For some natures it is an imperative necessity to be rid altogether of compulsion to do routine work for a living; for most of us relief from such labour is very attractive in prospect even if it is disappointing in actuality. Increasing freedom from the drudgery thought to be inevitable in an earlier age is one of the results of technical progress. Gradual reduction of the hours of work is a marked feature of modern times, and even unemployment may be regarded as leisure which is badly distributed. Thus we can understand the present widespread anticipation of the time when the problem of distribution has been mastered, the machine has been subdued to its true position as the minister of human welfare, and material needs can be satisfied by three or four hours' work a day. Then at last, it is thought, with the Golden Age of Leisure will come also the Golden Age of Freedom.

The facts of present economic tendencies prevent us from dismissing this prospect of a new world of leisure as an idle dream. Statistics showing the extent to which machines have already displaced human labour are now generally known. We are told, for instance, that whereas the miller of ancient Athens ground two barrels of flour a day, a Minneapolis flour mill now produces 30,000 barrels of flour per day per man. For thousands of years brick-makers averaged no more than 450 bricks per day per man. There is a modern brick plant



that will produce 400,000 bricks per day per man; it is said, in fact, that 100 men working continuously in such a plant could produce all the bricks used to-day in the United States and Canada. One man can now manufacture in one hour as many incandescent lamps as would have taken 9,000 hours in 1914. An Owen's glass-blowing machine produces from 25,000 to 30,000 bottles in 24 hours' non-stop work and displaces from eighty to ninety workers and twenty-five glass-blowing machines of older patterns. The German collieries in the Ruhr Valley increased their output between 1924 and 1927 by twenty-six million tons, while reducing the number of workers by 24,000. In the United States factory output per head was forty per cent greater in 1925 than in 1919. In agriculture the results of mechanisation are no less remarkable than in manufacture. Whereas in the United States an agricultural labourer could cultivate about twelve acres in 1850, to-day one worker takes care of an average of thirty-four acres; and in states with very large properties one man is employed for every 100 and in some cases even 134 acres.

Facts such as these only reinforce the conclusions arising from common observation. The necessary work of the world is getting done with far less expenditure of time and energy than formerly; or, to put the matter in another way, productive capacity is enormously increasing. Assuming, therefore, that the worst defects of trade-mechanism can be removed and that technological advance

continues at its present rate, and assuming also that the world escapes the disaster of another great war, we are justified in believing that in the not very distant future men will not only be able to consume a much greater quantity of goods per head, but will have considerably more leisure. Mr. J. M. Keynes has predicted that "the standard of life in progressive countries one hundred years hence will be between four and eight times as high as it is to-day. There would be nothing surprising in this even in the light of our present knowledge. It would not be foolish to contemplate the possibility of a far greater progress still."<sup>1</sup>

If, therefore, we can regard the Age of Leisure not as indefinitely remote but as likely to be ushered in during the course of this century, it is of more than academic interest to consider some of the problems likely to arise. In particular, we must try to see the relationship of these problems to the question of freedom. To foresee difficulties is to go a long way towards preventing them.

I must first put the point of view of the idealist who regards the coming release of mankind from the bondage of constant toil as the turning-point in cultural history; who talks with shining eyes of the time when men and women will be free to develop their individuality by engaging in all those elevating pursuits from which they are now barred by the grosser urgencies of life. He sees the factory-hands of the future leaving their machines after their four-hour spell to turn with body fresh and

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Keynes: *Essays in Persuasion*, 1931, pp. 364-365.

mind alert to all kinds of worthy occupations for physical and mental improvement. Culture will be rife. The lecture-rooms of adult classes on politics, economics, international relations, and what not, will be thronged with eager and industrious students; the landscape will blossom as the rose under the spade of amateur gardeners; every town and village will have its little theatre, busy with young enthusiasts rehearsing parts and painting scenery for community drama; on the greens of garden cities pipe and fiddle will be heard accompanying folk-dance and song; lanes and foot-paths will be gay with brightly clad hikers; open-air classes in physical training for young and old will be an important feature of social life; everywhere in organised groups and in the privacy of home people will be finding in the practice of arts and crafts an outlet for the creative energy that now has no opportunity.

Such is the vision of the New Arcady as it appears to a common type of sentimentalist. It is, I am afraid, another of those pleasant illusions arising from an exaggerated conception of the intellectual and moral capacity of the ordinary human being. That a limited number of individuals will derive an inestimable boon from a great extension of leisure-time may be readily granted. So far as they are concerned, a cultural revolution of incalculable importance now appears to be under way. But that the masses of mankind will be able to adapt themselves without great difficulty to very much easier economic conditions may reasonably be

doubted. For consider what is involved. The human race which throughout the ages of its evolution has, so far as we know, never been free of the struggle to wrest a livelihood from nature, will be introduced to a set of conditions rendering that struggle unnecessary. Deep-seated instincts and age-long traditions will no longer be relevant to the environment. Social custom will have to undergo a new orientation. It is a matter of experience that unlimited leisure provides the hardest test of character; and he would be an optimist of rare courage who would assert the capacity of most people to survive the test.

What is implied in the capacity to make satisfactory use of leisure? First of all, there must be qualities of mind. To occupy leisure well, a man must have, for instance, intellectual interests seeking satisfaction in some department of knowledge; or æsthetic taste finding scope in the appreciation of the arts; or creative ability issuing in original literary or artistic work; or organising energy such as displays itself in public work. Such requirements as these are obvious. In addition, there must be a quality often overlooked, namely, moral determination. To pursue an occupation in leisure-time is a very different matter from pursuing it as a paid vocation. The hobby has to be carried on without those incentives which make for regular and industrious application in the ordinary paid job. To say that a person is more likely to stick to the task he wants to do than to the routine-work by which he merely earns a living is to

misconceive the problem: the question is how many people have such a keen desire to do anything for its own sake, that they could use a large amount of free time without suffering from acute boredom and demoralisation.

It is too readily assumed, I think, that all men and women can easily develop leisure-time interests in hobbies. There are those who through sheer mental incapacity will never do so. There is also an important class of people who have plenty of energy of the kind enabling them to "get on" in trade or business, but who are not attracted by hobbies. Their interests are concentrated on the work that brings them a living; they are keen because they see a purpose beyond the mere doing of the job; they want to make money, or found a home and family, or rise in the social scale; or, if they are less self-centred, they may wish to feel that their time is occupied in doing something of visible use to the community. Not long ago the B.B.C. obtained a series of first-hand accounts of the psychological effects of prolonged unemployment upon people in various trades. One of the contributors, a skilled wood-carver, made some pregnant remarks: he said, "When I have no outside work I find I am almost petrified. No amount of unemployment can, of course, reduce my skill, it is second nature to me by now. But were I in danger of losing it to-morrow I could not make any attempt to keep it by working at home. The tendency, when one's regular work is lacking, is to do nothing at all. I naturally dislike hobbies

because they are aimless. I am an active person by nature, but my actions must be guided by a purpose, and that purpose must be in some way connected with my family or the people of my locality.”<sup>1</sup> This wood-carver was able to fill his leisure in normal times with activities connected with athletic clubs and educational and religious organisations. Many people, however, do not have this outlet. They find their dominant interest in the economic struggle itself. To them any great limitation of ordinary working-hours would not be particularly welcome.

As a result of work done for the unemployed and experiments carried out in anticipation of changing conditions, a good deal of information is now being collected concerning the ways in which leisure can be fruitfully employed; but, so far as I know, nothing has been done towards investigating the extent of individual capacity to use leisure. Before we proceed too far with a policy calculated to relegate daily work to the background of human life, and before we build up this, that, or the other organisation for the promotion of leisure-occupations, we ought to have a much clearer idea than at present of the general distribution of those qualities which make for the profitable use of leisure. The problem is one for the psychologist. In so far as the capacity to use leisure depends on general intelligence, the results of ordinary mental tests would furnish a guide. But we should also want to know how

<sup>1</sup> *The Listener*, 16th August, 1933.

widely and to what degree such qualities as æsthetic ability and mechanical aptitude are to be found. Are as many people endowed with the desire and the capacity to create beauty or make useful things as some social reformers imagine? It is frequently said that, if the old handicraftsmen could turn out the fine work they did in wood-work, metal-work, pottery, weaving, building, and so on, ordinary people are capable of the same excellence to-day. It must be remembered, however, that the handworkers whose products we admire were providing necessary commodities in return for daily bread; moreover, they worked within a craft-tradition. In the new conditions we contemplate all the necessary articles will be produced by machinery in factories. Can ordinary people be expected to display the same skill and success when they are making things just for the sake of making them? It is here that the moral energy to which I have already referred becomes of the utmost importance. That moral fibre does not always go with general intellectual ability or specific artistic gifts is a common-place. If we had even the roughest idea of the proportion of people in whom it enters as a considerable factor of personality we should be in a better position than we are now to predict how the population is likely to adapt itself to such a fundamental change in working-conditions as we are considering.

In the absence of scientific study of this matter we can draw conclusions only from personal observation and from such facts as are generally

available. Introspection is not a bad way of starting an investigation. How many of us could put our hands on our hearts and say that we should really be happier if we were not compelled to go daily to workshop or office, to write that wretched weekly article, to give that course of lectures, to repeat the round of household work, or to carry out whatever routine duties happen to be ours? How many of us have a private and particular interest so strong that it could fill all our hours and become an effective substitute for the urge to obtain a living?

Then we can observe how people actually spend their leisure now. (They might, of course, spend it differently if they had more of it, but their present actions have at any rate some significance.) Do they aspire to Higher Things or do they just amuse themselves? In the modern world educational institutions, books, and wireless provide immense cultural opportunities for all who desire them. What proportion of the adult population take advantage of these opportunities? Some kind of answer can be obtained from a very useful social survey recently undertaken in the City of Hull under the auspices of the Hull Community Council. We learn that in this typical provincial town of over 300,000 inhabitants only about 5,000 people take part in the organised cultural activities, and of these only about 800 are "students" (i.e., of the Workers' Educational Association or University Extension Classes).

Of course, we must allow for the fact that many people pursue cultural interests at home without



joining any class or organised group. (Yet it is natural to suppose that most of those who attempt to practise an art or craft, or to study a science seriously would wish to receive expert instruction at a suitable institution.) Is there any way of estimating the extent of private interest in cultural matters? The circulation of books and periodicals would give some guidance. In Hull over 60,000 people (i.e., one-fifth of the population) have readers' tickets at the public libraries. (In addition books are issued from school and evening institute libraries.) Of the issues from public libraries however, eighty per cent. are fiction. But as serious books generally take longer to read than novels, the disproportion between fiction and non-fiction is not perhaps so serious as it seems. Nowadays it is common for the man or woman who has a particular leisure-time pursuit to buy a periodical devoted to it. A comparison of the circulations of journals catering for special interests therefore throws some light on our problem. Periodicals dealing with music and amateur drama do not reach a circulation of more than a few thousand each. Photography has greater popularity. Of the several periodicals concerned with particular handicrafts and with handicraft hobbies in general, the most popular have well over fifty thousand readers. Gardening is served by three or four publications of large circulation; it holds, in fact, a unique place among the traditional hobbies demanding active skill, though wireless has become a serious rival. The light literary weekly commands a fairly large

circle of readers; popular science, however, apparently makes a smaller appeal. There is a very wide public for periodicals serving the outdoor amusements of cycling and motoring; its total is to be reckoned by the hundred thousand. A single popular cinema paper, however, will reach a circulation of a quarter of a million, and a weekly providing entertainment in the form of short articles, stories, and competitions will sell half a million copies.

Any survey of leisure-time activities must include physical as well as mental culture. What proportion of the population at present engage in active sports? In Hull, out of 27,000 males between fifteen and twenty-four, in 1931, only 3,000 were playing members of football clubs. It is only fair to say that the complaint is made of inadequate playing-field space. It is interesting to compare, however, the facilities provided for passive amusement. There are cinemas with total seating capacity for 33,000; football-grounds accommodating about 20,000 every Saturday; two greyhound racing tracks amusing over 2,500 people per week.

Such indications as these do not suggest that a population liberated from the heavier fetters of toil will rush to take part in elevating leisure-occupations. Unfortunately, in the conditions to be anticipated it will be those who are least capable of using leisure wisely who will have most of it; for whereas there will presumably be nothing to prevent professional men, artists, scientists, and all those whose daily occupation provides spiritual

satisfaction from working privately as long as they choose, the lower-grade workers employed on mechanical tasks will not be allowed more than short daily spells. I am afraid that the mass of the people may find the new freedom by no means an unmixed blessing. Some will turn to cultural interests, hobbies, or recreation of an active kind to fill their vacant hours. Many, however, will seek merely to be entertained in order to escape boredom and listlessness. And here will be a situation of which the commercial providers of mass-amusement will be very ready to take advantage. The cinema will cater for vastly expanded audiences; dog-racing tracks will multiply; professional sport will extend its range and popularity; dance-halls and similar places of amusement will grow in number; the radio will occupy a more and more important place in daily life; the output of literary trash will increase enormously. In fact, we may well be faced with a social crisis of the first magnitude. Not only will the economic revolution bring psychological disturbances that we can only guess at, but commercial efforts to provide a half-idle proletariat with games, unless carefully watched, will accelerate the vulgarisation of cultural life and carry it to a stage that one hardly dare contemplate. I have no particular desire to paint a depressing picture of the future, but I deprecate the attitude of those who would march into the new world of leisure trusting blindly in the innate goodness of human nature and ignoring the difficulties that will surely rise.

What can we do to meet these difficulties? In the first place, we should be wise to continue to look upon the economic system as a means of providing work rather than leisure, and to keep this object clearly before us in our remodelling of the system. I do not mean that we should seek to stabilise present conditions in industry: hours of work are still far too long in most occupations, and an increase in leisure is desirable from every point of view. But, in so far as we are able to bring the economic process under willed direction, we should strive rather to keep the maximum number of people employed for a reasonable number of hours per week than to secure the maximum production with the minimum demand on human time and energy. Such a course, I take it, would require either the adoption of a monetary system that would allow an indefinite expansion of consumption to balance an indefinitely expanded volume of production,<sup>1</sup> or a deliberate limitation of the use of machines. What is important at this stage, however, is to decide in principle the aim we intend to pursue.

Secondly, it will be necessary to organise large-scale facilities for the use of leisure. Those who are ready to take opportunity must be given it, and those who are not must be coaxed. The practical urgency of this problem has already been brought home to us by the need to do something for the unemployed. We realise, too, that, as the factory

<sup>1</sup> This is the purpose of Dr. Robert Eisler's plan explained in *Stable Money*.

worker becomes more and more nearly an automaton, he must be encouraged to become a person in his free time. What form should the facilities of the future take? The thoughts of social reformers of the old tradition naturally turn towards adult education as an important outlet for free energy. While a certain increase in cultural opportunities in the way of lectures, discussion-classes, and so on, will no doubt be needed, we should not stress this matter too much. Statistics of present attendances at adult classes go to show that the increase in demand is not likely to be very great. Moreover, as secondary and university education is made more easily available to all, there will be a constantly decreasing need for that kind of adult education which is a delayed substitute for the training that should have been received in youth. Centres under the direction of suitable leaders will have to be established for the encouragement of the less intellectually arduous forms of group-activity. Amateur drama can be much more widely cultivated than at present; there would also be room for many more societies practising choral and instrumental music. Organised physical training would make a wide appeal, and it would be very desirable in itself. The playing of games of all kinds should be encouraged as well as such outdoor activities as walking, cycling, and camping. Every effort should be made also to develop hobbies, especially those which involve work in the arts and crafts. Gardening and the keeping of allotments would no doubt prove the most popular form of leisure-occupation: the

pleasures of the garden know no distinction of class or mental capacity. This must be borne in mind in the future planning of urban building. In the poorer quarters of our cities no adequate space for gardens or allotments is now available; as these areas are rebuilt the necessary space should be left either by thinning out the population or by building higher so that the ground-area covered by bricks and mortar is reduced.

It is time to bring these remarks into relation to our immediate theme and consider the probable effects of the new economic conditions on freedom. To what extent will increase of leisure bring a real increase of freedom to the community? I have tried to suggest that the answer is not so simple and so certain as many people would suppose. That there will be a net gain on the whole, and perhaps a considerable one, is very likely; and the advantage for the limited number of those who have the requisite mental resources should be very great. The danger to be reckoned with, however, will be the social deterioration of a community insufficiently occupied. In order to avoid this it is probable that the State will have to intervene and limit that freedom which economic development confers. The community will be threatened with serious loss of morale through the boredom of inactivity and the surfeit of mass-entertainment. It may be necessary, therefore, to regulate to some extent the way in which spare time is used. Just as children are now compelled to go to school, so adults may be compelled to devote a certain

number of hours per week to occupations suited to their capabilities. Young people will certainly be kept under control in some form of part-time education for some years after the end of the normal school period. It may be that the labour-camps with which Nazi Germany has made us familiar may turn out to be something more than a temporary and local political expedient and may be the prototype of organisations that will be a permanent and important feature in the life of the future.

In order that the State may give this positive encouragement to the right use of leisure, it will be necessary to curb the activities of the purveyors of commercial entertainment and the creators of social fashion. The excesses of the entertainment-mongers are for all to see in the Riviera and similar places catering for the "idle rich". There is no reason to suppose that the idle rich as a class are particularly stupid and vicious. An idle middle class and an idle proletariat may be expected to be just as stupid within their means. And anyone who doubts the power of fashion-mongers to induce vast expenditure of time and money on objects which are completely futile or worse, should consider how in recent years the cosmetic-industry has brought women under the domination of the beauty-cult. We are beginning to recognise the absurdity of endowing the masses with wide political freedom and at the same time permitting them to become the prey of unscrupulous propagandists; it will be equally absurd to free them from economic

restraints and leave them at the mercy of commercial interests ready to exploit to the full the follies and weaknesses of human kind.

Let me conclude on a more hopeful note. If the society of the future is likely to be confronted with problems even more difficult than those of to-day, the conditions will in some respects be more favourable for their solution. A great deal of energy now directed into purely economic channels may then be diverted into political channels. Those who occupy the leading positions in the realms of intellect and of affairs will be less hampered by economic necessity than now; and public-spirited men and women of all classes will be freer to devote time and attention to matters directly affecting organised social life. Whereas most people to-day can give to social or political work only the limited time and flagging energy left over in days spent in earning a living, citizens of the future will be able, if they choose, to make public service their major activity. That most citizens will so choose is not to be anticipated; but we may fairly hope that those who do may be sufficient in number and quality to make free political institutions an adequate instrument for human welfare. .



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